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Dick Doom's Kidnapper Knock-Out; Or, The Search-Light Detective in Chicago.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



"YOU OPEN THAT SAFE, BOY, AND I'LL TAKE YOU IN AS MY PARTNER, YOUNG AS YOU ARE," SAID THE BLACKSMITH, POINTING AT THE SAFE.

Dick Doom's Kidnapper Knock-Out;

OR,

THE SEARCH-LIGHT DETECTIVE
IN CHICAGO.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

KIDNAPPING A WOMAN.

CHICAGO was startled, its best people thrilled with surprise amounting to almost horror.

The crooks of the city were correspondingly exultant, for Crime had won a great game.

The criminals, hiding from justice, smiled blandly as they met their pals, for Vice had downed Law and Order, apparently.

The crime committed was a strange one—one to make men feel dread in their own homes—to guard more closely their loved ones.

Those dwelling in the city and in the suburbs, looked well to their locks and bolts, purchased vicious dogs or hired watchmen, yet dreaded that even they might be in league with the crooks they were paid to watch.

An epidemic of crime was running through the country, and Chicago seemed to have become headquarters for the criminals as if by agreement.

Ordinarily where business centers and cities grow rapidly men wanting something to do flock to the spot; and so, also, do the "shady" gentry in pursuit of their game; but Chicago, during the great Exposition, found to its sorrow, that it had become the rendezvous of rogues to such an extent that its police and Secret Service force had striking proof almost daily of a grand league of criminals that made the work of detection doubly difficult and dangerous.

The particular crime now referred to that had outraged the community and so thrilled it with dread, was that it was the most conspicuous of many cases of kidnapping that had lately occurred.

Children had been spirited away, a bank cashier had been entrapped and held in hiding for ransom, and numerous other cases of minor importance had been known and widely commented upon, by the press and people; but when, from the most beautiful and wealthy suburb of the Lake City, a lady of wealth had been deliberately spirited away from her house by night, it was time to call a halt to the bold criminals in their work, and administer a rebuke that men of the conscienceless class would remember as a terrible warning.

This lady was a person of great wealth, and one over whose life a strange romance and mystery hung.

She dwelt in the fashionable suburb of Hyde Park, alone, save for her half-dozen servants, in a grand old mansion built a full generation ago, surrounded by large grounds walled in, and running down to the lake-shore.

The mansion had a weird and unenviable history attached to it, for men hinted that its builder, a sea-captain who had retired to the lakes, had made his money by smuggling between Canada and the United States, and the house was the hiding-place of his booty, and also the scene of the orgies of his crew after a successful crime.

But, the truth of these rumors could never be traced to old Captain Lawrence Granger, who, dying suddenly, had left his son, Captain Lawrence Granger, Jr., a very large fortune and the whole of that fine estate.

Under the new owner the house had been enlarged and improved, and the new master had "followed the sea" also, cruising only on the great lakes however.

His first wife was said to have died and left him a son; but he had married again, lived awhile in undisturbed prosperity, then passed away suddenly one night, as his father had done, and Mrs. Lawrence Granger number two became the mistress of Lake View Hall, and estate, dwelling there, thereafter, wholly alone, for her step-son had been exiled from home for some reason the public did not know or care to investigate.

But, the same fatality of sudden death which had come upon the two captains seemed also to pursue this widow of the second Granger, for she, too, died one night, without an hour's illness.

It was then that there suddenly appeared at the hall a young man, claiming to be the heir, as no will had been made, and he was on the eve of recovering the great estate, when unexpectedly, Mrs. Granger, the dead captain's first wife, put in an appearance, showing that she had not died, as had been announced by her husband, but, instead, had been incarcerated by her husband's deliberate act in an insane asylum in order that he might marry the woman who then had infatuated him.

These facts were indubitably proven; so she succeeded to the estates.

With the son, however—her own son—she would have nothing to do. He was merely paid a stipulated sum of money and then promptly dismissed—forbidden the premises, and virtually disowned.

But these several mysterious deaths at Lake View Hall had started the newspapers to sifting the matter, and Dick Doom, the famous crime inquisitor from the South, was sent for, and especially detailed to the case, with the remarkable result of implicating this discarded son and his accomplices in taking the lives of those dying there, and of the intended murder of the last owner of the estates, by whom he had been disowned.

These artful intriguants and criminal co-terie had been run down by the tireless and never-failing New Orleans shadower. He had scooped them all, and lodged every one of them in prison, and the mistress of Lake View had dwelt in peace in her elegant but ill-omened home.

Lived in peace, until one morning came the startling tidings of her having been kidnapped from her home—that Lake View Hall had once again been the scene of a dastardly crime.

CHAPTER II.

LAWYER BEALL'S SUSPENSE.

MR. BEALL, of the law firm of Richards & Beall, came down to his city office in Chicago, in no enviable frame of mind, for he had read at home in his morning paper, that his wealthy client, Mrs. Granger, had been kidnapped, and in the absence of his partners he hardly knew what to do.

He had ordered his carriage and driven at once to Lake View Hall, the scene of so many tragic occurrences, to find there only the servants, all of whom were in dire alarm at the kidnapping of their mistress, but could tell nothing about how it happened.

The butler said that Mrs. Granger had retired at her usual hour, he had closed the house up and gone to his quarters.

The maid said that her mistress had dismissed her early, saying that she would retire without her aid, after she had written some letters that were important.

When she had left her, there were upon the dressing-case her box of jewelry; but when she went to awaken her in the morning the bed was unslept in, the valuables were gone, and Mrs. Granger could nowhere be found, while a couple of dresses, her cloak, hat and some linen had been taken along, also.

No word had been left, but the front door had been opened by the cutting out of a panel, which enable the marauder to unbolt and unlock the door.

A dark lantern was found on the piazza and there were the marks of the carriage-wheels at the outer gate, while the pad-lock had been broken to enable them to enter the grounds.

With this discovery Lawyer Beall went to his office, convinced that Mrs. Granger had been kidnapped for one of two purposes: to meet the sudden end of the other owners of Lake View, or to be held for ransom for her return; he sincerely hoped the latter.

His first duty upon entering his office was to write a reward for information leading to the restoration of Mrs. Granger, or the discovery of the kidnappers who had taken her at midnight from her home.

Sending his office boy to the papers with advertisements of his liberal reward, he started to open his own private office, when to his amazement he found that he did not have his keys with him.

He had changed his suit of clothes that morning, so at once sent another office boy to his home for his keys.

The boy returned to state that they could not be found.

Then it dawned upon Mr. Beall that what he had believed to be a dream during the night, must have been a reality, for he had dreamt that he saw a man enter the open window of his room, go to his pantaloons and take his keys from the pocket.

With a dread at his heart he hastily sent for a locksmith to open his door for him.

The man came and after some difficulty, for the lock was a peculiar one, the door was opened.

A glance showed the lawyer that his papers had been rudely disturbed, but his look at his iron safe relieved his mind, for the door was locked.

It was true the man who had entered the office might have the key, but that was not all, for besides the two keys to the safe, there was a combination also which was needed to open the safe.

"Now open that safe, please," said Mr. Beall with some excitement, and the old man set to work to obey.

He was a skilled locksmith, one whom all acknowledged was a master artisan, but he could do nothing toward opening the safe.

For a couple of hours he struggled in vain and then said:

"I will go to my shop, sir, and bring my sachel of false keys and picks, and return and see what I can do."

"Do so, and lose no time, for I am most anxious to see if the safe has been entered, for if so, fortunes have been at the mercy of the robbers."

The locksmith left and reaching his shop began to look over his tools, telling the story the while to a youth who had only entered his employ a week before, to improve himself in the trade, and had shown an aptness that had surprised his employer greatly.

"Will you let me go with you, sir, for I may be of use?" asked the youth.

Permission was granted and the locksmith and his assistant returned to the lawyer's office.

CHAPTER III.

A BOY'S TRIUMPH.

LAWYER BEALL had grown more and more nervous.

Had that safe, in which were the most important papers, bonds and official documents belonging to clients, been opened and robbed?

How strange it was that the office had been entered the very night that Mrs. Granger had been kidnapped.

Was it a conspiracy against his client and her lawyers?

It looked so to the senior partner of the law firm, certainly.

He welcomed back the locksmith, and his young assistant, with delight, and said:

"I hope, this time there will be no mistake."

"I trust not, sir, but the very means to secure safety, in having the double lock and combination in your safe, is what thwarts me in opening it," said the locksmith.

"Well, do your best, and name your price," hastily said the lawyer.

The locksmith set to work, opened his sachel, took out his keys and tools, while the lawyer sat in his chair eagerly watching and waiting.

Minutes passed away, all the keys had been tried, all the picks and tools, and the lock remained unopened.

The sweat stood in beads on the locksmith's face, and the lawyer was white with suspense and dread.

At last the man almost groaned:

"I must give it up, sir, for it is beyond all my knowledge and skill to open your safe," and the locksmith showed that he was deeply humiliated at his failure.

"Will you permit me to try, sir?"

It was the young assistant who spoke, and the locksmith said sternly:

"Let you try to do what I have failed in?"

"Yes, sir, for I believe I can open it."

"You?"

"Yes, sir."

The locksmith laughed in a derisive way, but the lawyer's attention had been now attracted to the youth, and he gazed fixedly at him.

He had hardly more than noticed his existence before.

He saw a youth with slender, athletic form, clad in humble attire and wearing a leather apron.

His face was, however, one to command attention the moment one glanced into it, for the eyes were large, dreamy and expressive, and every feature was faultless, so much so that it gave him a look almost womanly.

But there was that in it to command admiration, and encourage confidence, and Lawyer Beall said:

"Let the young fellow try, man, for if he can do it so much the better for both of you."

"Go ahead, boy, but it's coming to strange times when the children teach their betters."

"Bah! this is an age of progression, locksmith, and I have learned much from fools," said Lawyer Beall.

The young man smiled and asked:

"May I try, sir?"

"Yes, and if you open that safe, boy, I'll take you in as my partner in the business," and the locksmith pointed to the safe, into which the youth had quickly thrust a key.

Lawyer Beall regarded the youth with interest, for there was something in the look of self-confidence that encouraged him to have faith in him.

The locksmith regarded him with a smile of superior knowledge and decision commingled, and both had their eyes upon him awaiting the trial.

The young man drew the key out of the lock, examined it closely, and then took up a piece of strong wire.

He bent the end of it with the pinchers, and taking another piece bent one end also, but only about half the size of the first.

He then put in one piece and followed it with the other, giving both a steady turn with the pinchers.

To the surprise of the locksmith they caught the bolt on the inside and it turned slowly.

"Now, sir, will you kindly give me the combination, and I can open the safe."

"You certainly have turned the bolt," eagerly said the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"Then place a finger upon numbers three and five of what appear to be bolt heads in

the door, press them, and draw hard upon your false key."

The youth did so and the safe door opened slowly.

The lawyer gave an exclamation of delight, while the locksmith uttered a cry of surprise, followed by the words:

"Boy, you have done it."

"Yes, sir," was the modest response.

"I watched your work carefully and believed that a double key would catch the bolt."

"Just what my key was, a double one—but great God! all of the papers of the Lake View Hall estate have been stolen, for the drawer marked 'Granger' is empty."

"Mrs. Granger kidnapped last night and the papers stolen—this is a conspiracy that must be unearthed, cost what it will."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RECOGNITION.

LAWYER BEALL seemed very much moved by the discovery that the Granger papers had been stolen from his safe.

The robbery had evidently been hastily done, for there was a money drawer which the robbers had not taken the time to open, and the other papers in the safe had remained untouched.

Only the "Granger drawer" had been opened, and on his bunch of keys was the key to it as well as to the safe, while the thief had in some way discovered the combination and used it to advantage.

"Is the loss a heavy one, sir?" asked the locksmith consolingly.

"In money, no; in other than money it is invaluable; but let me pay you for your services, my man."

"Pay the boy, sir, for he did the work."

"And I will take no pay, sir, for I entered this business to learn, and opening the safe has been a valuable lesson to me," said the youth.

"Surely, my lad, you will accept this," and the lawyer held forth a ten-dollar bill.

"Not a cent, thank you, sir; but let me suggest that you have a new lock put on at once."

"Ah, well thought of."

"Will you do it?"

"No, sir, but the locksmith here will."

"Well, my man, go to work at once, for I wish to lock the safe to-night of course."

The locksmith looked at the lock, talked in a low tone to his apprentice, even asking his advice, and the two left the office together, leaving the lawyer pacing up and down the room in a very perturbed state of mind.

"This is a very startling discovery for me to make, and I must report it at once to the chief of the Secret Service, for all the papers pertaining to the trial of that young culprit, Loyd Granger and his accomplices, with the confession of the woman, Charlotte Hull, are gone."

"This was a well carried out conspiracy, and means far more than the abduction of Mrs. Granger for ransom."

He touched a bell and the office boy appearing was dispatched at once to request the chief of the Secret Service Bureau to come to the law office of Richards & Beall at once.

The chief was found in his headquarters and soon appeared.

He was well acquainted with the lawyer, and the two sat down for a talk together about the abduction of Mrs. Granger and the robbery of the safe.

"I have already put my men upon the kidnapping case, Mr. Beall, to get what clues they can, but my main reliance is upon that incomparable ferret, Dick Doom, whom I telegraphed an hour ago to come here at once, if he is not engaged elsewhere upon a case."

"Now, let me know what papers you lost from your safe?"

"Well, sir, all the deeds and claims of the estate, with lists of all properties belonging to Mrs. Granger, and many important letters that cannot be replaced."

"In addition there were the papers gotten ready for the trial of that young scapegrace, Loyd Granger, and his accomplice, Wirt Westley, with the sworn statement and confession of the woman, Charlotte Hull, who, you know, was released from prison when the physicians pronounced her insane and who is now in the asylum."

"I always felt that that woman feigned madness, Mr. Beall."

"I feared so at first, but I could see no motive for it, as she saved herself by turning State's evidence, and not a physician who examined her who did not testify to her insanity."

"True, and she may be insane, yet I have my doubts; but, now to these stolen Granger papers."

"Yes, chief."

"Their loss will prevent the trial, you think?"

"Beyond all doubt, and clear the accused when tried."

"Too bad; but, what does their loss mean in connection with the abduction of Mrs. Granger?"

"I cannot understand it at all, yet there is a conspiracy in it, I feel assured—ah! here is the locksmith—no, it is the youth I told you opened the safe. Come in, young man."

"What! Dick Doom, is that you?" and the chief sprung to his feet in surprise, as the young locksmith entered the private office of the lawyer.

The seeming youth's face flushed, he hesitated an instant, and then stepping forward, said with a smile:

"Yes, chief, I may as well confess, for this time you have penetrated my disguise—yes, I am Dick Doom, the Ferret."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHIEF'S SECRET.

THE lawyer looked amazed, at seeing Dick Doom, the famous ferret, revealed in the young locksmith who had so cleverly opened his safe for him.

He also looked as though he wanted an explanation.

Dick Doom had shown such cleverness in selecting a new lock for the safe that his boss had allowed him to go in his stead to fit it, feeling especially pleased that the youth had not held him to his offer of partnership, and refused to take the money offered by Lawyer Beall, leaving it for him.

The chief regarded the young detective with the air of a man who had made a mistake.

"I spoke too quick; I should not have betrayed him to Lawyer Beall, for the youth is on some secret trail."

"But I have done it now, so I may as well see what his motive is," mused the chief.

"Well, Dick, what does your present disguise mean?" he asked after a moment, while Dick Doom meanwhile was complacently working at the safe lock.

"I'll tell you, chief:

"I am on a little trail on my own account and intended only to report to you when I found out what I was after."

"I'll guarantee it is in the Granger case."

"It is, sir."

"You have some deep motive in this."

"I have, sir, and as there has been the abduction of Mrs. Granger, and the robbery of Lawyer Beall, I will tell you my motive, sir."

"I felt that there was something back of the murder of the two captains, the second Mrs. Granger, and the attempt to poison the present one, when her twin sister perished in her stead."

"Certain memories of my own caused me to determine to sift the whole mystery and unravel the knots for my own satisfaction."

so I set to work on the case in my own way."

"I am certainly glad to find you here, for I wired your friend, the New Orleans chief, to send you right on to me here to put on this kidnapping of Mrs. Granger."

"Thank you, sir, and I too am glad that I am here; but the kidnapping and robbery took me completely by surprise, I admit, for I had not believed that the prisoners we run down had any accomplices outside of the jail."

"It seems that they have."

"Yes, and good ones."

"But how is it that you are in the locksmith trade?"

"You know I study any profession and trade to perfect myself in my work, sir, and I heard of the man I am now with as an expert in all kinds of work pertaining to locksmithing, so I decided to get a few pointers from him."

"I got one here sooner than I expected, and I learned one thing, that I can take my kit of tools and enter any house in this city, open any safe if I am given time, and if I can, professional burglars can do the same."

"I shall now give up my plan as an apprentice and take to the trail of those miscreants who have been working so successfully of late."

"More successfully than you now know, Dick, for I have some news for you and Lawyer Beall that will surprise you, and add another link to the kidnapping of Mrs. Granger and the robbery of the papers of her estate."

It was evident that the chief of the Secret Service had something of importance to communicate, but which thus far he had kept to himself for reasons that he deemed good.

The lawyer glanced at him with the look of one who expected to receive another blow, while Dick Doom coolly went on fitting the new lock with an air of perfect indifference.

"What I have to tell, it was decided by the chief of police and myself, should be kept a secret from the papers, for awhile at least, that we might the better work on the case, for last night *Loyd Granger escaped from prison.*"

CHAPTER VI.

A CLEVER ESCAPE.

"THE situation is just this," resumed the chief, after his secret had been told, to the amazement of both the lawyer and the young detective, for the latter ceased his work on the rope and turned to hear more.

"You know there are a lot of cranks who always insist upon going to the prisons to preach to the prisoners and pray with them, and public opinion demands that they be allowed to do so."

"One of these female cranks, for the women are the worst to seek out murderers, came to visit Loyd Granger and his accomplice, Wirt Westley."

"She labored with them as she called it for several weeks, was always polite to the guards, and in time passed in and out with only a friendly nod."

"She would tell the keeper that the unfortunates were learning to see the errors of their lives and were becoming daily more prayerful and repentant."

"At last she brought a fellow-worker with her and this one became most deeply interested in Westley."

"Last night the younger one came as usual and was admitted to Loyd Granger's cell."

"The guard heard her praying with him, then they sung a hymn together, and just as the lamps were being lit she rapped for the guard to let her out."

"He did so hurriedly, as he was lighting the lamps, and she passed on out of the prison."

"Supper was taken to the prisoner, but he lay on his cot and said he did not care for

any, and only this morning, when the keeper went his rounds, was it discovered that Loyd Granger was not in his cell, but instead the young girl whom the boys called Miss Salvation."

"She sat there serenely, attired in the prisoner's suit of clothes, and when discovered said quietly:

"He is safe and I am here to take what punishment you may visit upon me for freeing him."

"A plucky girl, but it was cowardly for him to take his freedom at her expense," said Dick Doom.

"Her punishment cannot be very great," the lawyer rejoined.

"Well, she is content to suffer in his stead, and claims to be his wife, though she is not yet eighteen."

"The strangest of all is that she really resembles the fellow enough to be his sister!"

"And there is no trace of the prisoner, chief?"

"None, Mr. Beall, for he passed out quietly past the guards, and made his escape good."

"The young girl gave it away that her companion was to free the other prisoner, Wirt Westley, in like manner, and she supposed had done so; but she failed to appear at the prison for some reason, so he is still safe."

"Now, Dick, you see that you have a good case to work up, and can start upon it whenever you please, and the sooner the better."

"I am already at work on it, chief, but will devote my energy now to recatching that scamp, Loyd Granger; but, tell me—have you heard of the insane maid, the real murderess of Mrs. Granger's sister?"

"Charlotte Hull, you mean?" said Lawyer Beall.

"Yes, sir; but, let me say, I do not believe she is any more insane than I am, and I'll wager high that she is not now in the asylum."

"If she had escaped, Dick, we would have been notified."

"Perhaps, chief, but you wish to keep Loyd Granger's escape a secret, for reasons of your own, and it may be that the asylum people may also wish her escape unknown."

"True; but have you any reason to believe that she has left the asylum?"

"My reason is the kidnapping of Mrs. Granger, the robbery of Mr. Beall's safe, and the escape of Loyd Granger and intended rescue of his accomplice, Westley."

"You look upon her, Dick, as the head and front of all this villainy?"

"I do, sir, most assuredly."

"Just my opinion," Lawyer Beall declared.

"Well, I will wire the asylum, and—"

"No, no; I will go there at once and see for myself," announced Dick Doom, and having finished putting on the new lock, he revealed to the lawyer how to make his own combination with it, and took his departure, to meet the chief later at his quarters, and decide upon a plan of action together.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FERRET ON THE RIGHT TRAIL.

"I WOULD like to see a patient here by the name of Charlotte Hull, entered incurable."

So said Dick Doom as he stood at the door of the asylum for the insane at K—.

He had enjoyed the view of the river, the distant town and the asylum grounds as he rode up to the institution, and muttered to himself:

"Poor creatures, they deserve all the luxuries that can be given them in their unhappy condition."

The attendant ushered the detective into the parlor and went off to seek the physician in charge.

The latter soon appeared to find in the

visitor a handsome young man, stylishly dressed and with courtly manners.

The ferret repeated his request to the doctor, and the latter hesitated, then said:

"I am sorry, sir, but we do not allow any one to visit the patient you ask for."

"But, sir, I must see her."

"It is impossible, I am sorry to say."

"I think not, sir."

"What are you to the patient?"

"I am an officer of the law, sir."

"Under those circumstances I must particularly refuse, for you would but excite her greatly."

"My dear doctor, I did not make this journey here for nothing, and, as you refuse my request, I must make my demand, and that you dare not decline to honor."

"Here is my authority, sir."

As he spoke Dick Doom threw open his coat, revealing upon his vest no less than nine medals.

All of them were of solid gold, and several set with precious stones, one being particularly elegant and costly.

"You see, my dear doctor, that I wear the State Secret Service badge of Illinois, the insignia of a special police officer of Chicago, of a county constable, United States Marshal, of the Secret Service Bureau of all the United States, and of an officer in the Government Secret Service League, which gives me admission to any place where I demand admission—will you refuse?"

The doctor looked confused, but at last said:

"No, sir, I cannot refuse, and I will be frank with you—the one you seek is not here."

"Not here, sir?"

"I regret to say she has escaped."

"When was this?"

"Three weeks ago."

"How could she do so?"

"Only through the connivance of the keeper who had her in charge, and who asked for, and received, leave of absence the night Charlotte Hull left, so we can only believe that he was tempted, for the patient had plenty of money, and so aided her in leaving."

"Beyond all doubt, sir."

"But what steps have you taken to find her?"

"The superintendent has done all in his power."

"He kept the escape a secret, not writing to the authorities, as he hoped to find her, and has paid out money liberally to hunt for her, but all in vain."

"And the keeper who aided her?"

"Has been sought for also, but with no result, I regret to inform you."

"How could he get out with a patient without being discovered?"

"He drugged the nurse on duty, sir, and thus slipped out."

"Ah! that is a good point to know; but give me the address and record of this keeper, please."

"I will do so with pleasure, and hope you may have better luck than we have."

"The superintendent was so anxious to find the patient, for, really, we have thought of late among ourselves, that she was feigning madness, that he wrote only last night to the famous detective known as Dick Doom, to put him on the case, for we have heard that he could never be foiled in anything he undertook."

"Where did he send his letter?"

"To the care of the Secret Service Bureau, Chicago."

"Where is the superintendent?"

"I hear him coming now, sir."

"Introduce me, please—my name is Dick Doom, the detective," and the young ferret really enjoyed the amazement depicted upon the face of the man to whom he had been talking, and who was the next in authority to the superintendent of the asylum.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SILENT SHADOWER.

THE superintendent was both surprised and pleased, when he discovered in the visitor the very one in whose hands he had written to place the case of the escape of Charlotte Hull from the asylum.

The two had a long talk together and when at last Dick Doom had left the asylum he was thoroughly informed on the whole situation and knew the data already discovered as to the escape, with the antecedents of the keeper, Seth Saunders, who had been a tried and trusted employee.

When he reached the little farm, where the keeper's home was, Dick Doom wired to the Secret Service chief in cipher:

"C. H. escaped three weeks ago. Is in your city of course. Am on track."

"D. D."

That evening the family of Seth Saunders were surprised to receive a visit from one unknown to them.

He was an elderly gentleman, well dressed, wore gold-rimmed spectacles, carried a cane and his gray hair gave him an air of dignity that suited him well.

Mrs. Saunders was at home with her three children, a son of twenty and two girls of eighteen and sixteen respectively.

They had a cozy cottage, a well-tilled farm and lived comfortably, the absence of the husband and father being regretted however, his duties as keeper of a ward at the asylum keeping him away from home.

The visitor asked for Mr. Seth Saunders, and was told that he was not at home.

"Where is he?"

"At the asylum."

"I heard that he was there, so went to see him, but was told that he had come home, having given up his place there."

"He is not here, sir," and Mrs. Saunders and her family appeared embarrassed for some reason.

"I am sorry, for it is important that I should see him, for I wish to return home very soon; do you recall an uncle of your husband who went to California early in the fifties?"

"Oh, yes, sir, we have often heard him speak of him, and that he had never heard of him since soon after his arrival there, where it was said he was rapidly making his fortune."

"His name was the same as your husband's."

"Yes, sir, Seth was named after him."

"Here is my card, madam, and I have made a fortune, I am unmarried, and I do not know any one I am more anxious to find than my loved namesake and nephew Seth."

The woman glanced at the card and read aloud:

"SETH JONES,

"California."

Instantly she grasped the old man's hand and dragged him into the house, while she cried:

"You are dear, good Uncle Seth, of whom my husband has spoken so much and loves so dearly."

"Come right in and—" she spoke in a whisper now—

"I'll tell you a secret."

"You see there was one of the lunatics escaped and poor Seth was accused of aiding her, and he is in hiding for fear of arrest and punishment."

"I thought you might be an officer, dear Uncle Seth, when you came and we were all alarmed; but I know where Seth is and we will send for him to see you."

The rich bachelor uncle at once found a warm welcome in the home of his relatives, and the hiding Seth was sent for, his son, Seth Jr., going after him, for he was hiding in an out-house on the farm.

"We intended selling out ourselves and going to the far West," volunteered Mrs. Saunders, and she ran on eagerly about their plans, hinting that Seth had lately gotten possession of some money, and the sale of the farm would bring them more and enable them to start a new home on the border.

Just then Seth Saunders the fugitive entered, and having been informed whom he was to see, he ran forward to greet his old uncle, when startlingly came the words:

"Hands up, Seth Saunders, for you are my prisoner!"

CHAPTER IX.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

A CRY of terror broke from the lips of Mrs. Saunders, as she witnessed the act of the alleged uncle, and a chorus of alarmed exclamations came from the son and daughter.

The "uncle" held a revolver leveled at the fugitive, and the position he took was such that he faced the family and could not be attacked from behind.

As for Seth Saunders he wilted like a rag, dropping into a chair with a groan while his hands hung listlessly by his side perfectly helpless.

"You are my prisoner, Seth Saunders, and I happen to know that you have been hiding for weeks, and your wife just told me you were negotiating for the sale of the farm, intending to move to the far West, and buy a home there, as you had lately gotten possession of some money."

The accused man only groaned, while his wife cried, as she regained her courage:

"Who are you that has dared come here with a lie and betray us?"

"I am known as Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Fetters—see, I put them in use now!"

He stepped quickly forward and clasped upon the unresisting man a pair of solid gold manacles, slender but strong, while Mrs. Saunders cried:

"You shall not leave this place alive, sir—I mean it."

At this the son plucked up courage and it was evident that Dick Doom was in danger, for the prisoner gained hope inspired by his wife and children.

But the disguised detective showed not a shadow of alarm and said calmly:

"My dear madam, do not make it necessary for me to put you and your son also in irons, for I am no fool to come here unprepared for resistance."

"Shall I signal for aid and manacle you also?"

The woman's courage failed her at this and she began to cry, while young Seth turned pale and glanced anxiously toward the windows as though expecting to see the aids of the detective peering in upon them.

One of the girls however found the courage to say:

"You deceived us, for you are not Uncle Seth."

"Oh no; I am glad to say that I am not you dear, rich Uncle Seth, just back from the gold fields."

"But I studied up your family history, and so decided to impersonate the uncle who went to California."

"The bait was quickly seized and I got my man, who took a large bribe from a lunatic and aided her to escape—to go forth and commit crime as she has in the past."

"He knew his family and so told them his secret, and decided to sell out and find a home elsewhere."

"They can do nothing with me for what I did," growled the man.

"What was your crime?"

"I did no crime, I only aided a woman to escape whom I knew was not crazy, and because she told me she was kept for the reason that others might get her fortune."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"You took a bribe from her?"

"What if I did?"

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken."

"What do you mean?" and Seth Saunders turned pale.

"You drugged the keeper on duty so that you could get by with the woman unseen?"

"Who says so?"

"I do! You gave her a drug."

"Only a little morphine."

"You are mistaken."

The man started and trembled, for the detective seemed to be looking into his very soul.

"It's all I did."

"Then you have not heard that instead of morphine you gave her arsenic and killed her?"

A yell of terror broke from the lips of the man and he fell back in his chair, in a half fainting condition.

"Come, Saunders, rouse yourself and hear what I have to say. I wish to be alone with you; but I warn you, Mrs. Saunders, that if one of you attempts to leave this house my orders will be carried out, and you will have only yourselves to blame for what my men may do."

"Retire to that room, please, and leave me alone with my prisoner."

CHAPTER X.

DICK DOOM'S TRUMP CARDS.

DICK DOOM's master mind had quelled all resistance and had gotten the Saunders family under his control.

He had them awed and they obeyed his command to go into the adjoining room.

As they did so and left him alone with the prisoner the latter cried:

"Why, have I not heard something of this death?"

"Not a word of it has been in the papers."

"True."

"So you have read the papers, have you?"

"Thoroughly."

"Then tell me, Mr. Saunders, if you have seen a single item of the escape of Charlotte Hull from the asylum?"

The man's faced paled a little, when he muttered:

"No, I have not, now I think of it."

"It was just for that you searched in the papers, and to see how your act was regarded and commented upon."

"But for the same reason that the asylum authorities decided to keep the escape a secret, until a proper time for making it known, the fact that you gave that unfortunate woman a drug, drugged her cup of tea, was also kept back."

Seth Saunders buried his face in his hands, and Dick Doom said again:

"Now, Mr. Saunders, there is much more back of that woman's escape than your aiding her, for she is a criminal, a murderess, and bribed you to let her out to go and do more devilry."

"I am sorry."

"So am I for it has placed you in a very unfortunate position, one with a gallows behind you."

"Oh, Lord, have mercy!"

"Now, there is a way sometimes in which the greatest criminals can escape punishment, save in their consciousness of doing wrong."

"Well, sir?"

"It is in turning State's evidence, and let me tell you that Charlotte Hull escaped for her crime by doing that very thing."

"She was held in prison to give her evidence, when she suddenly made known that she had a presentiment of death and wished to confess all and swear to it."

"She was allowed to do this, and the lawyers of the one she had wronged held her sworn testimony."

"Then she played the insanity dodge, and with such success she was released from prison and sent to the asylum.

"There she began to look about for a tool she could use to aid her in her escape, and found that tool in *you*.

"She had in her keeping some six hundred dollars in cash, and a bank book with credits of twelve thousand more.

"I happen to know that she wrote a check in your favor for twenty-five hundred dollars.

"I visited the bank and found the check was payable to Seth Saunders, and sent for collection through a New York City bank, and was paid.

"I visited that bank, and learned that it was deposited by Leonard Saunders, a merchant of New Jersey, and wiring a detective friend, he discovered for me that this man came from the same place in Massachusetts where you were born, and had a cousin Seth Saunders, who was a keeper in an insane asylum in the West.

"Now you know more about this woman, Charlotte Hull, than any one else, I am sure; and I am convinced, also, that you were to get from her more money than the checks called for, and will make the call on her for the balance when you visit Chicago."

"Do you know this?"

"I do."

"How?"

"I simply guessed it, and betrayed you into confessing it; but now let me tell you that if you will make a clean confession, tell all you know about this Charlotte Hull, give me her address and all other essential information, I will see that you are not tried for murder."

"I'll do it, I'll do it! Ask me what you will and I will answer, only do not let me be tried for murder and sent to the gallows, for indeed I did not intend to kill her; I only wished to put her to sleep, so that Charlotte Hull could get by her unseen.

"Will you save me?" pleaded the frightened man, now greatly excited at the fate which so surely threatened him.

CHAPTER XI.

A RUSE THAT WAS SUCCESSFUL.

"I will do all in my power for you, Mr. Saunders, but I wish a clean breast of it from you—no keeping back, no trying to deceive or to mislead me, for I am better posted than you think I am."

"No! no! I feel that you are well informed and I will tell you all I can; but, oh! how terrible will be my punishment to know that I killed that poor woman, Bettie Turner, for I liked her and she was always most kind to me.

"We get hardened in an asylum, sir, we see strange sights that make us callous to human suffering, but when one feels that he has taken the life of a fellow-being unintentionally it is awful," and burying his face in his hands Seth Saunders shuddered.

"Well, Mr. Saunders, now I am ready to question you."

"Yes, sir."

"Did you know Charlotte Hull before she entered the asylum?"

"I did not, sir."

"She was kind to you?"

"Yes, sir, as I said, she gave me fees for all I did for her, and always talked so rationally I began to feel that she was not crazy, though to all others she acted violently."

"Well?"

"She took an interest in me, she said, asked about my family, and sent little presents, or rather the money to buy them, to my wife, son and daughters.

"One day she told me that she was a wronged woman, that she had been incarcerated in an asylum that others might get possession of her fortune, they hoping that she would soon die there.

"I had heard of such things being done

before, and I believed her, and, as she had money, I supposed she was rich, for she showed me her bank book.

"One day she asked me to help her escape, but I refused.

"She offered me a thousand dollars, then raised the offer to twenty-five hundred and at last made it four thousand.

"She gave me a check, asking me to get it cashed for her."

"It was for twenty-five hundred?"

"Yes, sir."

"You got it cashed?"

"Yes, sir, as you seem to know."

"Well?"

"She put the money in my hand and told me it was mine if I helped her.

"I still refused and she then said she would give me fifteen hundred more if I would come to her in Chicago one month after her escape."

"One month after?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wanted to go West, sir, so I was tempted.

"I had been offered five thousand for my farm, and this extra sum would place us in fine circumstances in the West, so I yielded."

"And aided her?"

"I did, sir, for I gave her one of my suits, packed her clothes in a sachel and, having only drugged poor Bettie, as I believed, I went with her to the town, took the night train for Chicago and escorted her to the place in Chicago where she said she had quarters."

"Then?"

"I came at once home, sir, and went into hiding."

"At your home here?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the woman?"

"Remained in Chicago, sir."

"You know the address?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was where you were told to come after the balance of your money?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What name does she bear there?"

"I was told to ask for Mrs. Carlotta Cameron."

"Give me the address, please."

The man asked the detective to take a leather account book from his pocket, and in it was the address written:

"Mrs. Carlotta Cameron, No. —, Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill."

Looking on the opposite page, the detective read:

"On demand, after Sept. 30th, 1891, I promise to pay to Seth Saunders, personally only, the sum of Fifteen Hundred Dollars, for services rendered.

"CARLOTTA CAMERON,
"Nee, HULL."

"All right, Mr. Saunders, now I have just what I need and I'll promise to protect you; but you must go with me to Chicago, and if I have your pledge not to escape I'll remove the manacles from your wrists."

"I'll gladly give it, sir."

"All right, tell your wife to pack your grip and be ready to go with me, and the least they say about what has happened the better for you," said Dick Doom.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FERRET AND HIS PRISONER.

THE grip was packed, the family were advised by the ferret to keep silent upon the subject, and Dick Doom and his prisoner started for the town, distant half a mile.

As they left the house Seth Saunders said:

"Are you not going to call your men?"

"My dear Mr. Saunders, I have no men with me."

"The deuce you say."

"Fact."

"And you scared me, my wife and son out

of our wits, and we don't frighten easy, none of us."

"I took a bold stand, because I saw that it was necessary, for I felt that I would be murdered, to protect you."

"Well, you have got nerve, and plenty of it, mister."

"I'll have something else to tell you when we reach Chicago," said Dick Doom, and his words created an uneasy feeling in Seth Saunders's mind.

They caught the train in ample time, and reached Chicago without mishap, the detective keeping his eye constantly upon his prisoner, for he knew that he had a very slippery customer to deal with.

Straight to the quarters of the chief of the Secret Service drove the detective, and he was at once admitted with his prisoner.

"Well, Dick, back again, I see."

"Yes, sir."

"You got my telegrams?"

"Yes, three of them."

"This is Mr. Seth Saunders, chief, late an employee in the asylum, and, I might as well tell you the whole story now, the man who helped Charlotte Hull to escape."

"Ah!"

"He got twenty-five hundred in cash, with an I. O. U. on demand for fifteen hundred more, to collect here in Chicago, and I have the order and the address; but I wish you to put Mr. Saunders in pleasant but safe quarters for me, until I catch Miss Hull, after which he is free to go, for I have so promised him."

"Will you put me in prison?" whined Saunders, in alarm.

"Yes, but not in a cell."

"Will I get my fifteen hundred dollars?" he asked.

"Not if I can help it, for I think you have got blood-money enough."

Saunders shuddered at the mention of blood-money and asked:

"Then I go free as soon as you find the woman?"

"Yes, for I keep my word to both friend and foe, and I told you that you should, though you deserve punishment."

"Still I have made you suffer punishment in one way."

"I guess you have."

"I told you I had something more to tell you when I got to Chicago, and I'll now let you know what it is."

Seth Saunders glanced uneasily at the detective, then at the chief, and said:

"What is it?"

"I implied to you that you had drugged Bettie the nurse at the asylum, fatally, but such is not the case."

"I did not kill her?" almost shouted the man.

"No, you simply drugged her, but she got over it and so you can not be held for murder."

"And yet you scared me into believing she was dead and I made a full confession," and an angry light came into the eyes of the man.

"Yes, that is one of the tricks of my trade, and I tell you that you got off easily as it is."

"It was a mean trick, and to now cheat me out of my money—"

"Hold, sir!"

"I have made you no promises and I'll put you in a cell the moment that Mr. Doom sets you free if I have an ugly look or word from you, base ingrate, traitor and scoundrel that you are," roared the chief, and Seth Saunders shrunk back in great alarm, whining out:

"I didn't mean anything, sir—I beg pardon."

"Well, Dick, what do you wish done with him?"

"Hold him until I have found out if he has told the truth, sir, and if he has, set him free."

"But I warn you, Saunders, that I will have you shadowed until you sell your farm and go West, for I do not trust you, and it will be well for you to get out of Chicago an hour after you are set free."

"I'll do it, sir," said the man politely and he was marched off with an officer to prison, now completely cowed and in suspense as to what the outcome would be.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DANGEROUS WOMAN.

"WELL, Dick, you certainly have a talent for getting at the bottom facts of a case, and running down a criminal, for I had not the slightest idea that the woman, Charlotte Hull, was out of the insane asylum," said the chief of the Secret Service Bureau, when he was alone with Dick Doom.

"And my suspicion, sir, was first upon the woman, the moment that I knew of the kidnapping of Mrs. Granger, and then heard of the safe robbery."

"But why suspect an insane woman?"

"In the first place, sir, there is some connecting link between that woman and the boy, Loyd Granger, though just what I am unable to discover."

"Four murders have been committed in the Granger household, and all with some deep purpose."

"The boy may have murdered the old captain, his father and step-mother, but I doubt it, though he is capable of the crime I admit."

"The woman certainly poisoned Mrs. Granger's twin sister, supposing it was her mistress to whom she gave the fatal draught, and she was very quick in her determination to turn state's evidence, before the truth was known, and thus save her neck."

"Once having made her confession, she played the insanity dodge, and as sane as you or I, she made her escape from the asylum and then plotted to rescue Loyd Granger and Wirt Westley from prison before their trial."

"The boy was rescued, and—"

"By a young girl."

"True, sir, but one in the pay of Charlotte Hull, I'll stake my life upon it."

"The lawyer's rescuer lost her nerve, but for that the woman does not care, as it is the boy she seeks to save."

"And the lawyer may now be induced to talk to save himself, thus incriminating the boy and the woman."

"Perhaps so, sir; but I would keep a very close watch on him."

"He will be closely watched now, never fear."

"I mean, sir, that he may never live to face his trial."

"He is in good health certainly."

"So, comparatively, were the Grangers who died so suddenly."

"Ah! you hint at another poisoning case; but I fear you are too suspicious this time Dick."

"It may be, sir; but the one who kidnapped Mrs. Granger robbed Richards & Beall's safe, and rescued Loyd Granger, and these acts were all done from some deep-lying purpose, for that woman Hull intends to get hold of that estate for the boy, mark my words, sir."

"Well, you are doubtless right, Dick, in this case as in others; but you have the matter in hand, so work it your own way, and what there is in it you will discover."

"But do you expect to find the woman at the address she gave the man Saunders, to call and get the balance of his pay?"

"Yes, sir."

The chief shook his head.

"Why not, for was the man not in her power, so could she not trust him, especially when he was to be gainer by it?"

"Very true."

"Yes, sir, I shall give Charlotte Hull a

call at that address she wrote down, and if I do not find her I shall be very much, mistaken."

"It seems to me she would be very careless to allow any one but an accomplice to know her address."

"She regarded him in a measure as an accomplice, and she doubtless has some way to avoid capture if she grows suspicious."

"But she is a very remarkable woman, chief, for when I first met her, when I went disguised as lady's companion to Mrs. Granger, I would have sworn that she was Irish, for she assumed the accent well, and yet I heard her speak French perfectly, and several times caught her English when she did not give it an accent."

"She pretended to be ignorant, and yet is a well-educated woman—oh yes, chief, she is as deep as the sea, a very dangerous woman, and I will find it no easy task to trap her; but I'll do it," and Dick Doom uttered the last few words in a very determined way.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK DOOM DISGUISED.

"THAT young King of Ferrets has some deep motive in his devotion to this case, beyond his professional ambition and pride, and which he has not made known to me," said the chief of the Secret Service to Lawyer Beall, when he called upon him to make known the fact that no trace could be found by the detectives of Mrs. Granger, and that Dick Doom had at least tracked down the truth that Charlotte Hull had a hand in the rescue from prison and the kidnapping."

"I agree with you, chief; but it will come out in good time, and do you know that I am so confident of his success that I do not worry as to Mrs. Granger's fate, and the result," responded Lawyer Beall.

And both the Secret Service chief and the lawyer were right, for Dick Doom did have a deeper motive than appeared upon the surface, in shadowing the Granger mystery to the bitter end, and which motive will be made known in good time.

When he left the chief's headquarters he went to his hotel, where he kept his rooms, his parlor in the center and a bedroom upon either side, always registering as though his wife was with him, that when disguised as a woman he could leave and enter his apartment and create no suspicion.

Once in his pleasant rooms, he paced to and fro for an hour or more, lost in deep thought.

Then he suddenly exclaimed:

"I have it!"

"Yes, I will play that game for all it is worth."

Having made up his mind to some course, he went into the bedroom on his right and taking a bunch of keys from his pocket opened one of the several trunks that were there.

From the trunk he took out a suit of clothes that might look well upon a country deacon, a high black hat, shirt with standing collar, and a wig with rather long, reddish hair.

He also took a pair of spectacles and a pair of kid gloves from the trunk, and placed all, with a pair of boots, much too large for him, upon the bed.

Then he sat down to a table and taking out a leather account-book, which he had gotten from Seth Saunders, he took up a pen and began to carefully study the man's writing.

Being satisfied he began a letter, dating it at the village near where Saunders lived, and after several attempts wrote what suited him.

His next move was to dress up in the clothes he had put out upon the bed, and having completed his toilet he looked just what he intended himself to appear, a countryman of thirty years of age.

Locking his trunk, and then his doors, he went quickly down stairs, sprung into a hack and gave the driver an address.

The hackman drew up at the number, and getting out the detective paid liberally for his ride and dismissed the vehicle, after which he walked a couple of squares from where he had been put down on the north side of the city, and at last halted in front of a house, the number of which he had appeared to be looking for in a bewildered sort of way.

It was a small brick house, and ascending the steps he knocked at the door though there was a bell, which however he did not seem to understand the use of.

After several vigorous knocks a woman appeared and said angrily:

"Faith, yez greeny, didn't yez see ther bell?"

"But who is it yez is afther see'ng here?"

"I wants ter see Miss Carlotta Cameron—is she to hum?" was the reply.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FORGED LETTER.

THE Irish servant woman was by no means tidy looking, her hair was of a fiery red hue, and looked as though it would make a good bird's nest, while her face was freckled and her teeth very much discolored.

She wore an old shawl pinned up close around her neck, and her feet were clad in slippers whose usefulness had departed.

Her face was given a strange expression from the fact that one eye was closed and her nose was very, very rosy, as though colored from excessive drinking.

"Now phat does the loikes of yez wish to see the mistress for?" she asked in a harsh and by no means flattering manner.

"I have business with her."

"What is it?"

"I'll tell the lady."

"Who be yez?"

"Tell her I'm Seth Saunders's brother, and I have a letter for her."

"Give me the letter."

"I won't, for I was to deliver it only to her."

"What did yez say yer name was afther being?"

"My name is Saul Saunders, and I'm a brother o' Seth, whom she knows well."

"You tell her what I say."

"Come in," said the woman after a moment's meditation.

The disguised detective entered the hall and found it plainly, but neatly furnished. "Sit yerself there," said the servant, and pointing to a chair she went into the rear of the house.

After a few minutes' delay she returned and said:

"The mistress says she'll be afther seeing yez, Misther Seth Saunders's brother, but yez will be afther having to wait a bit until she makes her twilight."

"All right, I hain't got nothin' to do."

"Yer look it; but go inter ther library there, and the mistress will come in when she is ready."

The disguised ferret went into the room indicated, a pleasant little library, and took a seat in a vacant sort of way.

But everything in the room came under the closest scrutiny, and he photographed, as it were, upon his mind, all that he saw.

Half an hour passed before the mistress had finished her toilet, and then Dick Doom heard her coming.

There was a dull thud in the hall, as from a cane, and the door opening an old lady entered.

Her form was slightly bent, and she leaned heavily upon a cane as she advanced; but she was dressed in a black satin robe, lace collar and cuffs, and wore a cap, as though fond of dress even at her advanced age.

Her hair was snow-white and her eyes were shielded by spectacles, while upon her fingers she wore numerous rings, and gems were pendent from her ears, matched by a large breastpin that held her lace collar together.

"You wanted to see me?" she said in a weak voice.

"If you be Miss Carlotta Cameron, I do."

"I am Miss Cameron, and you come from my friend Seth Saunders, I hear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Why did he not come?"

"Well, he is in hiding, for what I guess you know."

"I can guess; but where is he?"

"Gone West to settle."

"Have you a letter for me?"

"You be sure you are Miss Carlotta Cameron?"

"Oh, yes."

"He didn't talk as though you was sich an' old lady."

"I have aged much since I last saw him; but where is the letter?"

"Here it is, mum."

The detective took out the leather wallet and after awhile handed over a letter, with the remark:

"This is his, for he said I had better take it along, as what you wrote for him was in it."

The woman took the letter and breaking the seal read it aloud.

It was dated some days prior, at Seth Saunders's home, and was as follows:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:—

"Since your escape I have been in hiding, for my home is constantly watched.

"I have signed the deeds for the sale of my farm and my wife is to sell it and follow me with my son and daughters, for I go ahead to escape being tracked, and prepare a home for them.

"My brother Saul will hand you this, and I go to his ranch in Colorado, for he came at my call on him for help.

"He is a fugitive himself from justice, having killed a man in our village some years ago, and dare not venture further East than Chicago, where he is unknown.

"I give him my account book and wallet, with your I. O. U. written in it, and he will look you up, so please pay him the sum due me, waiving the fact that it was to be a personal demand, as that is impossible.

"I hope you will prosper, but should luck go against you come out and live with us; Saul will tell you how to find us, and you will receive a welcome and find a home.

"Saul will receipt in full for me, but please give him the money and not a check, as he knows no one to identify him.

"With good wishes,

"Your Friend,

"SETH SAUNDERS."

CHAPTER XVI.

GOLD VERSUS CONSCIENCE.

THE woman having finished reading the letter aloud, went over it again thoughtfully, but to herself.

Then she remained silent for full a minute before she spoke, the detective assuming an air of utter indifference the while.

At last she said:

"Have you read this I. O. U. of mine?"

"Yes, my brother read it to me, and I glanced over it."

"Then you know that it demands a payment to Seth Saunders in person only?"

"So it says."

"And yet he now requests the payment to be made to you?"

"He does."

"This would break the contract as worded."

"Under the circumstances he thought you could do so."

"I do not know about that."

"He did his part faithfully, did he not?"

"Yes."

"I don't know just what service you demanded, but you admit that it was done."

"It was."

"He says I will receipt for him."

"Yes."

"He wants the money, and unless you wish to get out of paying it, I should receive it."

"I do not wish to get out of paying it, for what he did for me accomplished all I wished, and I will pay it," said the woman, thoughtfully.

"My brother Seth said you were square, and he didn't think you would refuse when you knew he dared not come himself."

"I will not, so come to-morrow afternoon and I will have the money for you, as he does not wish it paid in a check."

"You found me without any trouble, I see?"

"Yes, ma'am, I found you; but this is a big city, and I am a stranger, you know."

"Yes, and your brother says that you are also a fugitive from justice?"

"I killed a man and left home, for if I had remained they would have hanged me."

"Would it hurt your conscience very much, seeing that it already has a human life to bear, if you killed another person, think you, of course meaning that you would be well paid for it?"

"Do you want it done?"

"I did not say who wished it done, merely asked you, if you felt that you could make some money by it, and a big sum too, if it would trouble your conscience too much to be guilty of it?"

"Maybe not; but it is not an easy load to bear, the taking of a human life."

"Very true, but then a handsome sum in money might outweigh the terror of the deed, might it not?"

"I'd like to think over it."

"Well, think over it and come and see me to-morrow afternoon, for I will have your brother's money for you, and we can talk over your making a sum even larger."

"All right, ma'am, I'll come, for I know how much Seth thinks of you."

"I guess I'll be going now," and he arose from the chair, took his hat from the floor and continued:

"Good day, ma'am, I'll be here when you wish me to come."

"Say at three o'clock then; but pull the bell, don't knock."

"That is what your girl told me; but since I went West they have got a great many new-fangled notions that I don't understand."

"I'll be here on time," and the pretended Saul Saunders left the room and was ushered out of the front door by the mistress herself, for there was a double bolt, and two locks on it, which caused him to say:

"My! but you must be awful scared of robbers here in Chicago; why I never bar my doors at the ranch, only keep my Winchester and revolvers handy in case an Injun or a renegade come along."

"You would like the Wild West, if you came there to live."

"Perhaps so; but my aim is to live a life of luxury in the East, for my heart and soul are set upon it, and a fortune will drown all qualms of conscience, my friend," and the woman spoke suddenly with remarkable vigor.

"I have heard so, ma'am," and the detective stepped outside the door, stood on the pavement an instant, like one bewildered, and then walked off down the street muttering to himself:

"Dick Doom, you are on the right track, and doing the cleverest piece of detective work of your life—yes, the beginning of the end has come."

CHAPTER XVII.

A PLOT TO KILL.

TRUE to his promise, the next day, at the appointed time, Dick Doom ascended the steps of Carlotta Cameron's house and rung the bell.

After a short delay it was opened by the mistress herself, the Irish servant not appearing.

"Come in, Mr. Saunders, my servant is out on an errand, so I opened the door for you myself," said the same old lady whom the detective had seen the day before, though, with an evident taste for dress, she wore a different robe now, and her lace cap was ornamented with ribbon.

"Come into the library and we will have a talk," and securely bolting the door she led the way, explaining:

"Living here as I do only with my servant as a protector, I have to be very careful."

"Saul Saunders" told her that she was very right to be careful, for he had already learned what a wicked city Chicago was, and had been told that robbery, murder and other crimes were of every-day occurrence.

"Yes, it is a very wicked city, indeed."

"But now let me tell you that I have the money for you."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"Yes, I decided to pay it, and I will take your receipt—I have written it for you to sign," and she handed him a piece of paper, on which was written:

"I hereby acknowledge the receipt of fifteen hundred dollars, which now cancels all indebtedness due my brother, Seth Saunders, by Carlotta Cameron, for services rendered."

He read it once over and affixed his signature in a cramped hand, and then counted over the money handed to him by the woman.

He counted it like one unused to handle large sums, and said:

"Yes, I make it just fifteen hundred."

"Now, Mr. Saunders, as your brother served me well and faithfully, I feel that you will do the same."

"How can I?"

"You see that I have more money here?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, there are two thousand dollars here."

"I see."

"Count it."

"What for?"

"It is for you."

"For me?"

"Yes."

"You want to buy me?"

"Exactly."

"What to do?"

"I bought your brother and paid him for his work."

"That's so."

"He served me well and I believe you can serve me equally as well."

"Maybe."

"We spoke yesterday of the price of a human life."

"Yes."

"Now there is one I wish out of the way, for his living will do an immense deal of harm."

"How so?"

"He can give testimony that will cause both your brother and myself to go to prison."

"No!"

"Yes, and he will do it."

"Who is he?"

"He is now in prison himself, but he will be offered his life, for he is accused of murder, if he will betray others."

"And he can?"

"Yes, he knows too much for it to be safe to let him live."

"I see."
 "So he must die."
 "He is in prison, you say."
 "Yes."
 "Then he is safe."
 "No, for you can reach him."
 "How?"
 "I do not wish to commit myself unless you pledge yourself to act."
 "There is money in it?"
 "You see this money?"
 "Yes."
 "Two thousand dollars?"
 "Yes."
 "Now I will hand to you to-day five hundred dollars, and when you do as I demand, I'll give you the other fifteen hundred dollars."
 "What am I to do?"
 "You are to go to the prison and pretend to be the brother of the man I refer to."
 "He is an Englishman, but you can say you came over years ago and only lately learned of his trouble."
 "I will give you his history so you will know just what name to give and what to say."
 "I understand."
 "Once you have gotten into his cell tell him you came from Loyd Granger, to plot his escape from prison, and incidentally offer him a drink."
 "Well?"
 "I'll give you the flask to carry with you, and he loves liquor, so will eagerly drink it."
 "Promise to call the next day to see him, but—"
 "You need not go, for he will be dead."
 "Dead?"
 "Yes, the liquor will be poisoned and one swallow will kill him, though not for half an hour or more, so you can get well away, and change the disguise you wear there, for you must not go as you are."
 "I see."

"Will you do it?"
 The man pondered awhile as though weighing chances and then said:
 "I don't like to do it, but will if you put another thousand to it, and life is cheap at that."
 "You don't know him even."
 "That don't matter, he is human, and I know what it is to make a grave in the world."
 "All right, I'll pay you the odd thousand, so come and get it the day after the deed."
 "I'll come, for I'll need it to quiet my conscience with," was the reply in a sad voice.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DEADLY POISON.

DICK DOOM left the house of Carlotta Cameron with the same air he had assumed the day before.

One seeing him would never have mistaken him for other than he pretended to be.

He looked to the life the western countryman, and he impersonated the character perfectly.

He had carried with him from the house a flask on which was a label bearing the legend:

"Pure old Maryland Rye."

The flask had a silver stopper screwed on and looked like one in which only the finest whisky would feel at home.

He put the flask in his pocket carefully and going down the street several blocks turned off into an avenue where he knew he would catch a cable car.

He then took the first car that came along and changed at the crossing to one that put him down near the headquarters of the Secret Service chief.

He found the chief just entering his office and said:

"Hello, mister, be you ther cap'n o' ther crook-catchers?"

The chief turned toward him with an impatient manner and said:

"Yes; are you a crook whose guilty conscience has betrayed you into looking me up?"

"Maybe I is, and maybe I hain't; but I knows a thing or two."

"What do you know?"

"What I know is worth money to tell."

"Who are you?"

"A greenhorn."

"You look it."

"Thankee."

"Where are you from?"

"From whar most greenies come from."

"Where is that?"

"Injany, yer greenie."

"See here, my man, come into my office for I wish to talk with you."

"I'll do it, for I wishes to talk with you."

The chief led the way into his inner office, glanced at the papers placed on his desk since his departure a couple of hours before and said:

"Sit down a minute."

"Don't keep me long, for my time is money."

The chief glanced quickly toward the pretended countryman, took a closer view, and then said sternly:

"See here, do you know I intend to put you in jail?"

"What fer?"

"Because you are constantly fooling me, Dick Doom."

The detective laughed and replied:

"You are getting so that you begin to penetrate my disguises, chief."

"I do not know whether I am or not."

"Well, I am here now as Saul Saunders."

"And who the mischief is Saul Saunders?"

"I don't know, chief, only I thought I would play Saul Saunders, a brother of Seth Saunders, to see what I could find out."

"Ah! you are shadowing?"

"Yes, I have shadowed."

"Tell me of it, Dick."

"Seth Saunders is safe."

"Yes, I saw the chief of police half an hour ago."

"And Wirt Westley?"

"Is all right."

"Can you spare the time to go with me now to see the chief of police?"

"It is important?"

"I think so, sir."

"If you think so it is, and I will go."

"Thank you, sir, whenever you are ready."

"I am ready now; but let me congratulate you upon your most perfect make-up."

"It is not bad, for it has fooled as bright eyes as yours, sir."

"Where?"

"I'll tell you later, sir."

"Then let us be off."

The two left headquarters together and the chief having telephoned the chief of police that he was coming with a friend to see him, they found him in.

He introduced Dick Doom as "Mr. Saunders of Indiana," and the inspector shook hands with the supposed countryman and said:

"How can I serve you, Mr. Saunders?"

"I wants ter see ther best police surgeon you has."

The chief touched a bell and the surgeon was sent for.

When he appeared the detective poured some liquor from the flask into a glass, and said:

"Doctor, tell me what you make out of that liquor, when you analyze it?"

The doctor looked at the liquor, smelled it, tasted it, then dropped some acid from his case into it and said:

"It is deadly poison."

"Is there enough in this flask to kill a man, sir?"

"There is enough in this glass, just what you poured out, to kill a couple of men."

"Thank you, sir, I thought that there was."

"Where did you get that poison, my man?"

"It was given to me, sir."

"To drink yourself?"

"Oh, no, to give to another to drink."

"You did not do it, I hope?"

"Oh, no, sir, but I wish to have the credit of having done so."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I wish the chief of police to give out the report that the prisoner, Wirt Westley, in some way got hold of some poison, and, expecting to hang, drank it with fatal results."

"But such is not the case."

"Very true, sir, but it must appear so," said Dick Doom in his determined way.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FERRET WINS.

THE chief of police and the surgeon were really startled at the bold proposition of the supposed countryman, while seeing their surprise the chief of the Secret Service Bureau laughed and said:

"Well, he has done you as he did me."

"Do you not know him, chief?"

"I do not remember him," said the chief of police in a puzzled way.

"It is Dick Doom."

"The devil!"

"Oh no, chief, I am not as bad as that," laughed the detective.

"Well, Mr. Doom, what are you up to now?"

"I wished to get your surgeon's opinion about this beverage, sir, and as I am convinced, and you also, that it is a deadly poison in this flask, I wish to ask you to do me a favor."

"Out with it, Doom."

Dick Doom tossed a roll of bills on the desk and said:

"You will find there five hundred dollars, chief, a sum given me as an advance bribe for taking human life."

"Ah! this looks serious."

"It is serious."

"Who gave it to you?"

"Just now that is a secret, sir, but I received that money as an earnest of twenty-five hundred more that would be paid me when I have done my work."

"What work is that?"

"To kill."

"Who?" asked the chief in utter amazement.

"A prisoner in your keeping, sir."

"Who is it?"

"That renegade lawyer, Wirt Westley."

"Ah!"

"I wish to ask you to permit me to see him, sir, for I desire to play a game upon him, but with your knowledge."

"All right, you have my permission."

"I desire to let it be known, sir, that his brother is coming to see him, and have him so told, for he will feel assured that it is some plan of those who wish to rescue him."

"All right, Mr. Doom."

"When I have gleaned from him all the information that I can, I will show him my flask, tell him the truth as to who his foe is, and see what more he will let be known under the influence of the danger that will naturally overwhelm him."

"You are shrewd, indeed, Dick Doom."

"I think I see my way clear, sir, to get some valuable information from the man."

"Command me all you desire, Doom."

"Thank you, sir, I felt sure that you would give me your aid, but, I have more to ask."

"Well, out with it."

"I wish you to let the papers of to-morrow morning get hold of the fact that Wirt Westley committed suicide."

"But he has not."

"Nor will a man of his temperament do so, sir; but it will be the favor I ask to have it so reported."

"Why so?"

"You see, I get the balance of my bribe, sir, for I am hired to put him to death, or rather give him the poison."

"I fail to just understand your drift, Mr. Doom."

"If I am bribed to take human life I have the money to prove the bribery on the part of one who wishes Westley dead."

"Ah!"

"If I see him, pretending to be his brother, I can glean information from him I could not otherwise secure."

"Very true."

"Having done this I can then play my cards differently, for I will tell him that I was bribed to take his life, but would not, and his anger against that one will cause him to say that which he would not otherwise do."

"You are reasoning well."

"Then, sir, with the papers reporting that Wirt Westley, presumably believing that he must hang, had taken his own life, will give me a chance to work this intended murder for all that I can get in the way of information."

"I see your drift now, Mr. Doom, and will do as you wish."

"What do you say, chief?"

"I always do as Dick Doom requests, sir, and he has never failed me yet," was the answer.

"Then I will do so too, only I'll catch it when the truth comes out."

"On the contrary, you will get the credit, chief, for a clever ruse that gained your point, and if the papers were fooled you bagged your game by fooling them."

"Right you are, Doom, so give your orders as you wish them to be obeyed and I'll indorse you," said the chief of police.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT HE KNEW.

THE man who had fled from England, a fugitive for his evil deeds, the son of a nobleman, well educated, with a profession that would have enriched him, possessing the talent he did, but who had turned it to evil ends, and, instead of reforming his life upon coming to America and beginning anew, had herded with the worst element of humanity, and become leagued with murderers and robbers, until the end came when he was arrested as a plotter and accomplice in the mysterious deaths in the Granger mansion—this man, with all to make him honest and true, had taken the downward path and lay in a cell awaiting trial that might send him to the gallows.

His accomplice, Loyd Granger, the heir plotting for the Granger fortune, had escaped, but in his case the plot of rescue had failed.

His feminine accomplice, Charlotte Hull, feigning insanity after turning state's evidence, had outwitted lawyers, detectives and asylum attendants and was a free woman.

But he, Wirt Westley, lay in his cell awaiting his trial.

Gloomy indeed were his thoughts, for the escape of Loyd Granger had been reported to him by his keepers, and he knew how utterly hopeless would be any future effort in his behalf to rescue him.

And yet he could not but start with a ray of hope when it was reported to him that his brother wished to see him.

"My brother!" he gasped, remembering that his father's death a year before had left his elder and only brother a lord.

Had that brother, an English noble, who had lectured him in other days, aided him, and at last vowed never to do anything more for him, repented of his vow and come to him in his misfortune?

But how had he found him, disguised as he was under the name of Wirt Westley?

He thought for a moment and then it came to him that Loyd Granger having escaped, was plotting his escape, and clasp- ing his hands in a melodramatic manner, he cried:

"Ah! that my brother should see me thus, should find me here!"

"Will you see him, sir?" asked the keeper.

"It will crush me to the earth, but I must, if only to bid him farewell, for he can do nothing for me now."

The keeper walked away and soon re- turned, accompanied by the visitor.

He unlocked the cell door, allowed the vis- itor to pass in, and said:

"Your brother, sir."

"Oh, my brother!"

"That you should find me thus!" cried the prisoner, placing his arms about the vis- itor's neck.

"Oh, rats!" said the visitor impatiently, for the keeper had turned away.

"I suspected that you were here for a motive, and was playing a part," the pris- oner said, somewhat crestfallen at the re- buke he met with in the singular but ex- pressive ejaculation of:

"Rats!"

"Play to an audience then, for Old Keys has gone, and I alone am here."

"And who are you?"

"I am a pal of that she hyena, Frills, sent to get you out of this."

"Dear, good Charlotte."

"Oh, yes, good enough in her way, but business clean through; but she pays me my price and I am here to give you a lift."

"Good! How is it to be done?"

"The woman that the boy sent squirmed at the last minute."

"The boy sent no one, if you mean Loyd Granger."

"Who, then, sent the Salvation gal?"

"Frills."

"She's a dandy; but the girl lost her nerve."

"She did, and you stayed while the boy skipped; but I come from Frills now to help you."

"What is your little game?"

"She says, if she does not help you out, is it your intention to squeal?"

"Like a pig under a gate, you bet it is."

"You'll chin to save yourself?"

"You bet, and I've sent in word that I'd play that tune."

"Do you know anything?"

"Enough to hang the boy and Frills."

"They say you don't know anything."

"Don't I?"

"That's what they say."

"Well, just ask Frills if I don't know who that boy really is, and that it was her plot that put old man Granger in the soup years ago, and followed with his son some years after, and next with the step-mother, all dying suddenly, and without a will, so that the one remaining would get the money."

"Don't I know, too, that she made the mistake in poisoning Mrs. Granger's twin sister, hoping with her going out like a can- dle, and leaving no will, the boy would claim all as heir."

"Oh, yes, I know my text, and can peach, and peach I will if she don't get me out of this, and if any one hangs it will be a form in petticoats."

"Just tell her this, will you, *brother mine*," and the prisoner laughed in a derisive way.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SUICIDE.

THE derisive laugh of the prisoner grated harshly upon the ears of his visitor, but the latter was perfectly calm, and replied:

"Well, Westley, I'll tell you a secret."

"Out with it."

"It is just what the woman thought you would do."

"Squeal?"

"Yes."

"I swear I will."

"She tried to save you when she did Loyd Granger."

"But it was a miss-deal."

"Yes, by a strange coincidence her mes- senger was recognized as an old offender, and arrested at the very jail door."

"She was a bad one, eh?"

"Yes, a forger, but known to Frills."

"Where is she?"

"Frills?"

"No, my pal that missed cue."

"She is in this very prison."

"Poor woman, I am sorry for her."

"So you see Frills did her share."

"She must do more."

"What?"

"Save me."

"She sent me here."

"And you can?"

"No, I cannot."

"Then I peach."

"So Frills decided you would do, so she engaged me to prevent it."

"You?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By silencing you."

"How can you?"

"By preventing your telling."

"Only my freedom, and my share in the plunder prevents that, for I know how I can save my neck from stretching, and I will."

"But Frills sent me here to prevent it, I tell you."

"You can't, unless you get me out of this."

"I can."

"How?"

"By obeying orders."

"What orders?"

"Those given me by Frills."

"What are they?"

"Do you see this bottle?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"It is a flask—yes, it is whisky."

"You love liquor?"

"More than all else."

"It has been your ruin?"

"Oh yes, I may as well confess it."

"And yet you would take some?"

"Yes, give me a drink."

"Did I not tell you that Frills sent it to you?"

"I don't care who sent it, I want a drink, for my throat is on fire."

"See, here it is, but I tell you not to drink."

"Don't preach to me, but give it to me."

"Do you want to die?"

"It will not kill."

"It will."

"No, no, give it to me," pleaded the man.

"I say that it will kill you."

"In time yes, but let me drown my sor- rows now."

"It will drown them forever."

The words were uttered so expressively that the man hesitated and asked in a hoarse whisper:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that this liquor has been poison- ed."

"What?"

"Yes, it has been so fatally drugged that one drink of it would end your life."

The prisoner seemed to realize that his visitor told him the truth and he shrunk back with livid face and a look of horror and cried:

"Did you poison it?"

"No."

"Who did?"

"Did I not tell you that your accomplice, Frills, sent it to you?"

"She poisoned it?"

"Yes."

"For what?"

"Can you not guess her motive?"

"Ah! she feared I might betray her?"

"Yes."

"That, she having escaped the gallows by turning state's evidence, and having gotten the boy out, I would be left to my fate, and to save myself might tell all that I knew?"

"It looks that way certainly."

"Do you not know it to be?"

"I was simply engaged for the work."

"What work?"

"To give you the poison."

"Yet you did not?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Well, I got my money and do not have to carry on my soul the weight of having taken your life."

"That means that you are a villain yet not a murderer."

"About that."

"Well, whatever you are or what your motive may or may not be, thank you, and I wish that I could repay you."

"You can."

"How?"

"Make a clean breast of it to me, of all you know about that woman and her crimes, the boy and his deeds, and all that you can tell me."

"By Heaven, but I will!"

"Yet why would you know?"

"I am Dick Doom, the detective."

"Great God! you know all," cried the prisoner, in alarm.

But the next morning the papers came out with the statement, that Wirt Westley had committed suicide in his prison cell by taking poison which he had mysteriously concealed about him in a way that had defied all search.

CHAPTER XXII.

LED BY A WOMAN.

It was a dark night, the rain was falling steadily and the wind whistled around the eaves of the large mansion of Lake View Hall and sighed among the pines and cedars that sheltered it.

It was the night upon which three mysterious happenings took place in Chicago, the robbery of the safe in the private office of Lawyer Beall, the clever escape of Loyd Granger from prison, leaving in his stead a young and beautiful girl to occupy his cell, and the abduction from her home of Mrs. Granger, the mistress of Lake View Hall.

Mrs. Granger sat alone in her beautiful rooms, engaged in writing a letter.

She had dismissed her maid and was seemingly very much occupied in the work before her, for she often held her pen up from the paper and became lost in a deep reverie.

She was a handsome woman of forty-five, with a good form and an air of refinement about her that stamped her as well-born and bred.

"There were lines about her mouth and a look in her eyes that revealed how deeply she had suffered in her life, in wedding a man she had devotedly loved and believed all that was noble and true, to find him to be unworthy of her, cold, designing, false and willing to destroy her happiness to wed another.

Incarcerated in an asylum as insane by her husband, the anguish she had suffered had been great indeed.

At last getting her freedom, through her husband's sudden death, she had returned to her home, shown her right to claim his fortune, and devoted her life to one of luxurious enjoyment.

Now, as she sat there in her handsome rooms the thought of further trouble and suffering did not come to her.

The fact that the youth, claiming to be

her son, lay in prison awaiting trial for murder, did not, for some reason, cause her great unhappiness.

The old house with its weird history, shunned by many as though it were a plague-spot, appeared to hold no terrors for her.

That day she had received a letter, and she was answering it as she sat there at the desk.

The letter read:

"Are you not willing, now that you are nearing old age, to ease your conscience by aiding me to keep from the gallows one who bears your name, one who is on the threshold of youth, and who will lead a different life should he get free from this place, this living tomb?"

"You possess wealth untold, and if you will donate a few thousands to the rescue of your poor, unfortunate son, you will be happier in your declining years, and not have the horrid phantom before you of your own flesh and blood dangling at a rope-end, the life choked out of him."

"Remember that there is such a thing as inheriting evil as there is good, and what my father was."

"Could I be an angel with a devil for a father?"

"I ask you to save me from death, to set me free, and I will go far away from here, never to come near you, or make a demand upon you again, for you know that I dare not trust myself within the clutches of the law here."

"Will you try me once more and rescue me, putting out only a few of your many thousands to that purpose?"

"I ask it for the sake of my childhood, which you so tenderly cared for, not to let me die like a dog."

"It is my last and only appeal, the appeal of one who is dying, one who looks down into an open grave."

"Your unhappy Son,
"LOYD."

This letter had been delivered that day in person, a young girl had brought it, and the mistress of Lake View had told her that she would answer it, and to call on the morrow for the reply.

Now she was answering it, and as she thought and thought, she suddenly cried:

"Yes, I do not want his life on my conscience—I will rescue him."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITORS.

As Mrs. Granger, with her heart touched by the letter she had received, and beholding in her mind the gallows loom up before her, and Loyd Granger standing upon it, decided that she would once more lend a helping hand and aid the unregenerate youth to escape, as she sat there, pen in hand to write him a letter, the last she would ever write him, telling him that, for the sake of the young and beautiful girl who had that day brought his letter and pleaded so eloquently for him, she little dreamed that there was a plot against her.

She did not see through the darkness and the rain, a carriage drive up to the outer gate.

She did not see two men get out, followed by a muffled form that looked as though it might be a woman.

There was a low, whispered conversation, then the padlock of the gate was broken, by the blow of some instrument brought along, and the three entered the grounds.

They tramped along the gravel drive, unmindful of the pelting rain, and, with rubber-clad feet ascended the broad steps to the piazza.

Halting at the door the muffled form that looked like a woman, gave a few directions, and a sound followed like the cutting of a saw.

This was kept up for some time, and when it ceased a square block had been taken out of the door.

A hand was then thrust through the opening and the key in the lock was turned, the bolt shot back and the three entered.

A dim light burned in the hall, for the butler was superstitious about the place and always kept a lamp lighted in several parts of the old mansion.

The muffled form led the way up the broad stairs and halted her companions at a door that led into one wing of the mansion.

Leaving them there she glided away down the hall and entered another door.

She moved as silently as a cat, making no sound whatever.

Entering the door she found herself in an ante-room.

A door beyond was open and through it streamed a bright light.

On tip-toe she went toward it and glanced through the half drawn portiere.

"There, not five feet from her, sat the mistress of Lake View, engaged in writing, or rather thinking."

Her back was toward the midnight marauder and she saw her not, suspected not her presence.

The hands of the intruder were raised and held out before her.

Then the fingers moved lightly, and through the room began to steal a strange, sweet odor that was overpowering.

It pervaded the room where Mrs. Granger sat, environed her with its fragrance and stole away softly her senses.

There came over her a delightful languor, she seemed sinking away into dreamland and the head drooped forward, then rested upon the desk and the mistress of Lake View Hall was unconscious.

Her maid had retired to her room across the hall, to sleep through the night unless a bell from her mistress called her.

The butler was in his quarters, the cook in her room dreaming and no one suspected that a crime was being committed there in that elegant home.

When the head of the woman drooped the woman behind her quickly turned to a window and raised it, for she too began to feel the languor of the fragrant drug.

Standing there a moment she inhaled the pure air, and then stepped to the sleeping woman and placed a handkerchief, scented with the dreamy perfume, under her nose.

Quickly she stepped about the room, looking into drawers, picking up here and there jewelry, and opening the writing desk, took out a large roll of bills.

Thrusting them away, she went to the door and opened it.

The men were there awaiting her call.

"Come, sir, for she is unconscious."

"I will pack up a few things for her, while you wrap her in the blankets you brought with you and bear her to the carriage."

The men obeyed in silence.

They were hard-faced fellows, hired for evil work, and willing to sell their souls for gold.

The form of the unconscious woman was wrapped up snugly, and one man bore her down the stairs, the other following with a hastily-packed grip.

Out of the mansion they crept, the woman closing the door behind them, and so on out to the waiting carriage.

"A good night's work, and if the one I sent to the lawyer's home to get his keys has done his work as well, then I am the one who controls the situation," muttered the woman as she entered the carriage, which rolled rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PLOTTER AT HOME.

A WOMAN sat in a well-furnished room in an humble-looking home in a secluded

street, the morning after the kidnapping of Mrs. Granger from her home.

The woman was well-dressed, but wore a mask and gloves, while a veil was wound about her head that no strand of hair could be seen to note its color.

Under the mask, and with face, neck and hair thoroughly concealed, no one could tell whether she was white or black.

Suddenly a knock came at the door, and in response to a command to enter, a negress came into the room.

"Well, Dinah, what is it?" asked the masked woman.

"A man to see you, missus."

"Is it the one who was here yesterday?"

"Yes, missus, same one that came late in de arfternoon."

"Show him up."

The negress disappeared and the masked woman sprang to her feet and paced the floor uneasily.

"What if he should have failed," she muttered.

As a step was heard without she quickly resumed her seat and became perfectly calm.

Again came a knock and the negress ushered into the room a visitor.

He was a dark-faced man, roughly dressed, and looked just what he was, an Italian, though when he spoke he had but very little accent.

"Well, Pietro, you have returned," said the woman with no show of excitement in her voice or manner, whatever she might feel.

"Yes, lady, I am here as I agreed."

"You were successful?"

"I was, lady."

"How was it done?"

"I watched him closely to see all he did, followed him home, but no opportunity offered to seize him, and so I waited until late."

"You were wise."

"It came on to rain and I waited on the piazza until he retired and the house was still."

"And then?"

"I entered the house by a window, gained his room, but as he was restless and unquiet, I used the drug and he sunk to sleep."

"Then I searched his pockets and got the keys."

"Yes."

"I went to his office, entered it with the false keys I had made, opened the safe, just as I had seen him do from my hiding-place across the area, and found the drawer marked 'Granger.'"

"Well?"

"I took all the papers that were in it."

"Did you take anything else?"

"No, lady, I looked over papers to see if there were more with the name of Granger upon them, but found none, so I re-locked the safe, took the keys with me and left the office."

"You have done well, Pietro; but where are the papers?"

"All here, lady."

He took from a bundle, as he spoke, a large roll of papers, some of them having an official look and bearing seals.

The woman glanced over them and said:

"I paid you five hundred dollars?"

"Yes, lady."

"Here is the balance I was to pay you—five hundred more."

"I thank you, lady."

"Report to Dinah here every third day, or night, for I may have more work for you."

"I will, lady."

"You can go," and the woman rung the bell and the negress came to usher out the visitor.

When alone the masked woman began to look over the papers she had so cleverly recovered, and her voice had an exultant ring as she cried:

"Now I am mistress of the situation, for with these papers, and her in my power, I can force her to my terms."

"If she refuses, then the result be upon her head."

"But no, she will not refuse, she dare not, and I will triumph."

The woman laughed exultantly as she spoke, but her voice was harsh and there was a tone of venom not of joy in the laughter.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ESCAPED PRISONER.

CAREFULLY over each paper went the plotter, her joy at discoveries she made finding vent now and then in exclamations of a strong character, until at last she laid them to one side and said:

"Now to see him; but he must yield."

She touched her bell and the negress appeared.

"Dinah, I wish to see the young gentleman who came here last night."

"Yes, missus, I go and bring him."

The negress left the room and made her way along the hall to a door at the further end.

She knocked and a voice within bade her enter.

She put a key in the lock, turned it and entered.

The room was meagerly furnished, though not uncomfortable, and its occupant was a young man.

His face was pale, haggard, and was stamped with evil and dissipation; but otherwise it was handsome, attractive and intelligent, while his manners were not brusque.

"Young massa, de missus wants ter see yer right away."

"All right, auntie, I am with you," and he arose from the cot upon which he had been lying, and followed her.

He was taken to the rear room and ushered into the presence of the masked woman.

The negress left the room, but did not tarry to eavesdrop, for she had received a lesson one day when she made the attempt, by a bullet being fired through the door over her head.

Aunt Dinah knew the one she served well and did not care to find out anything she did not wish her to know, after having received such a warning as she had.

The moment that the door closed the woman removed her mask and stepping quickly toward the youth threw her arms about him, kissing him tenderly.

He made no demonstration of affection in return, but said simply:

"You got me out of prison."

"Who else would?"

"I wrote to her yesterday by Beulah, and she was to answer to-day."

"Had I known this I would have waited another day."

"I am glad that you did not, for delays are dangerous; but was this your plot, or Beulah's?"

"She was determined to save you, and gave me her plan, so I consented."

"And Westley was left in prison?"

"Yes, the woman I engaged to free him became unnerved and did not make the attempt; but it is just as well."

"It is not, for he must be set free."

"I will attend to that all in good time, for he is too dangerous a man to be allowed to remain in prison after he knows of your escape."

"Yes, he is a dangerous man; and between us we have told him all, so that he can destroy our plans if he will."

"He can, if he is allowed to do so."

"Now what about Beulah?"

"Well, she is in prison."

"Do I not know that, for she remained in my clothes while I escaped in hers."

"Let her stay there."

"Oh, no."

"I say, yes, for she knows nothing, so cannot betray us, and when I arranged with her it was in her home, not here, so she does not know where to find me."

"But would you leave her there?"

"Why not?"

"She sacrificed herself for me."

"Why should she not be willing to suffer a short imprisonment to save you from the gallows?"

"It will break her heart to feel that I have accepted her sacrifice to leave her to her fate."

"So be it; let it drive her to suicide and you will be free of her."

"But I do not wish to be."

"Why not?"

"I love her."

"Bah! what is love but a myth?"

"She loves me far more than I deserve, or love her."

"She risked her life to save me, the day she came out in the boat when our craft capsized, and she did save me."

"She did not suspect who I was, what I was, and I visited her from time to time, and learned to love her."

"I asked her to marry me, and her father drove me from his house, for he had never liked me."

"Then she secretly became my wife, and she has known since that I am all that is bad, mean and wretched."

"But she never deserted me, and when she came to see me she was plotting my escape."

"I have gotten free, she is in prison, and you tell me to leave her to her fate, well knowing that her sensitive nature will drive her to suicide."

"I hope that it will, for you must get rid of her, as I have other views for you," was the response of the wicked woman plotter for evil.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INFLUENCED FOR EVIL.

"WHAT is your plan regarding me?" asked the escaped prisoner, when the woman had made known her wish that he should desert the devoted wife who had sacrificed herself for him.

"I'll tell you in a nut-shell—you are to let that girl go her way, to the grave if it suits her to do so, for there is now a future before us, where we can go far from here and live in luxury the rest of our lives."

"I wish we could leave our consciences behind us."

"Bah! why repine and repent?"

"Live for the present is my motto."

"But what have you done that will enable you to go away?"

"You know that I own this house, that I keep Dinah in, and the one in the rear of it?"

"Yes."

"I have sold them both, to be given up within a couple of months, when I am to receive the other half due in cash."

"Well?"

"The money I received has enabled me to work out my plans."

"Yes."

"You are free, I am also, and your young wife is in jail, and Wirt Westley will soon be beyond harming us."

"What does that mean?"

"I intend to set him free, but never allow him to find us again."

"To shake him, eh?"

"Yes, about that."

"It will be just as well."

"I took the names you gave me, of your robber pals, and so got Pietro the Italian to do some burglary work for me."

"Did he get much?"

"A fortune for us."

"He is tricky, so look out."

"He was well paid for it, brought the

papers to me here, saw me masked only, and if he is treacherous Dinah can simply say that her lady lodger is gone, and you know the houses are both owned under different names."

"Oh, but you are a schemer."

"Thanks, I am proud of it."

"Well, what fortune did Pietro get for you?"

"All of the Granger papers in the hands of old Beall, the lawyer."

"That was a good haul indeed."

"So good that it makes me mistress of the situation."

"You can bring her to terms now?"

"Oh, yes, easily, as she is in my power."

"Of course, holding the papers you do."

"But I hold more."

"What?"

"The woman!"

"Ah!"

"It is true."

"Where is she?"

"In this house."

"How did you get her here?"

"I used two more of your pals to go with me last night and kidnap her."

"You are a dandy."

"Thanks; I accept the compliment, as you mean it."

"She is here, then?"

"Yes, and I will bring her to terms."

"I think you will."

"But I wish to make terms with you first."

"Well?"

"You are ready to hear my demand?"

"I am."

"I will get for you a fortune."

"So you have told me for years."

"It is in our grasp now."

"It really looks so."

"Now, I am not working for any one else than you and myself."

"I see."

"The money I got for the houses will be used up in my bribes and plotting, leaving but little; but it is make or break with us now."

"It appears to be."

"With the fortune gained, we can go elsewhere and enjoy it, as I have said; but before I do more, and remember that what I have done I can undo, I wish a pledge from you."

"Well?"

"I wish two."

"Name them."

"First, you are to allow me to handle the fortune, to manage it."

"Well, it would be better, for I am a trifle extravagant."

"You grant this?"

"I do."

"The next is that you give up your wife, desert Beulah to her fate, and consider the tie between you forever broken, for in another land I will get for you a rich wife."

"Must I do this?"

"You must, or lose all."

"Poor little Beulah must go, then, for I love gold better than all else," said the heartless youth.

"Then it is settled; now return to your room, for I have another to see."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

WHEN the heartless youth had returned to the safety of his room, and been locked in by the negress, Dinah, the masked woman again touched the bell.

Dinah appeared and her orders were:

"Now go to the room of the lady brought here last night and bring her here."

"Yas, missus; but I kinder feels sorry for her, for when I tuk her her supper she seemed to feel awful bad."

"All the sympathy you feel, Dinah, I will give you a golden plaster to cure."

"Yas, missus."

"Now go."

Dinah went to another room, one in the center of the house.

There was no window in it, only a skylight, and the ceiling was very high.

It was intended as a lumber, or storage room evidently.

In it was a mattress upon the floor, a low chair and little else.

There was no furniture that might be used to climb up to the skylight.

Upon the mattress, as Dinah unlocked the door, lay a woman.

It was Mrs. Granger, and not only were her hands manacled, but there was a gag in her mouth.

The negress said in a not unkindly tone:

"I done come fer yer, honey."

The woman rose and faced her, as though ready to go where she might be taken.

She silently followed the negress from the little prison, for it was nothing more, and was led into the presence of the masked woman.

She started slightly at beholding her, and the masked woman said:

"Dinah, remove the gag from her mouth."

The negress obeyed.

"Give her a glass of water."

It was done.

"Now, madam, I am ready to talk business with you."

The prisoner bowed, for her throat was yet too contracted to speak.

"Attempt to call out—Leave the room, Dinah!"

The negress quickly obeyed.

"Attempt to call out and I will kill you as I would a dog."

"I shall give no outcry."

"You will be wise not to."

"Now, do you know me?"

"If I did not know to the contrary," and she spoke with evident difficulty, "I would say that you were my maid, Frills."

"Am I not Frills?"

"She is insane and in an asylum."

"So were you."

"Alas, it is true as far as being held in an asylum was concerned, but I was not insane."

"Nor was I, for I feigned it."

"Ah! then you are Frills?"

"So you called me, but my real name, or the one I went to serve you under, was Charlotte Hull."

"I remember, and you proved my foe, for you it was that brave young detective Dick Doom found out, that murdered my sister, believing that you were poisoning me."

"Yes, I was so accused; but I escaped from the asylum and I plotted to kidnap you."

"And did so."

"Oh, yes, I accomplish what I undertake."

"You wish ransom money now, I suppose, so that you can make your escape?"

"I wish money, yes."

"Name your price and I will try and purchase my freedom from you."

"Have you any idea what you are worth?"

"I have."

"So have I, for I know every dollar you possess, all your real estate, bonds and everything that will bring money."

"You are well informed."

"Oh, yes; but I tell you this to show you that I will not be deceived by you."

"I do not seek to deceive you."

"Then tell me what you are worth."

"At a guess, for I have not figured up my riches carefully, I am worth about a million."

"You are worth more."

"I am glad to know it."

"Yes, your estate is worth three hundred thousand over the sum you named, and let me tell you that just six hundred thou-

sand dollars are in negotiable bonds and money."

"Deducting that sum you have large real estate interests that will leave you some seven hundred thousand dollars and pay you a very handsome interest besides."

"Well, what is all this figuring upon my fortune for?"

"To show you what you are worth."

"I expect you are about right, so that there is no reason for argument upon the subject."

"Now you wish me to name my price for your freedom?"

"I do."

"It is just six hundred thousand in the bonds and money I spoke of, with a pledge not to attempt to hunt me down or prosecute me in any way."

The response of Mrs. Granger was a burst of laughter that really did not seem to be forced.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SECRET NOTICE.

"You appear amused," said the masked woman sharply.

"I am."

"What amuses you?"

"Your demand."

"You refuse it?"

"Naturally."

"I have more to say."

"I can but listen."

"You are a woman along in years, and the fortune left you—for I demand but one half—will support you like a princess, and no one need know about the bonds and money I get."

"Well?"

"In return you are set free, and get rid forever of me and your son Loyd."

"He is in prison and the gallows will free me of him, while my being abducted from my home will set the tireless Dick Doom upon your track so that you will soon be run down and I freed."

"You think so?"

"I know so!"

"Let me tell you that I live many lives; this negress has never seen my face, and does not know me."

"I have sold this house under one name I bear, and I have sold the one that is in the rear, and into which I have a secret means of going that would surprise you."

"I did not know you were so rich."

"Oh, yes; I managed to pick up a great deal during the year that I was in your service. But let me tell you that in the other building I am a different person altogether, so no one can track me, and you must come to my terms."

"I will not."

"We will see."

"We shall."

"Now you think that Loyd Granger is in prison."

"I know that he is."

"You are mistaken, for I not only freed myself from the asylum, but I kidnapped you, and I likewise set him free."

"I do not believe it."

The masked woman touched a bell and when Dinah appeared she ordered:

"Bring that young man in here, Dinah."

Dinah disappeared but soon returned, accompanied by the youth.

"Loyd Granger!"

"My God! you tell the truth," exclaimed Mrs. Granger.

"Take him back, Dinah," and turning to her prisoner she continued:

"You are satisfied?"

"I am."

"Will you pay that money now?"

"No."

"I must then give you another reason for your doing so."

"What is it?"
 "See here! Do you recognize this bunch of keys?"

"Ah! The silver tag has Mr. Beall's name and address upon it."

"Yes."

"What does it mean?"

"Simply that I robbed him of his keys, entered his office last night, opened his safe and took out every paper belonging to you and referring to the Granger estate, and to your family history."

"I cannot believe this."

"You doubted me before, but now believe the testimony of your own eyes."

She opened the desk before her as she spoke and held up the bundle of papers before the woman.

Mrs. Granger groaned and covered her face with her manacled hands.

"You see that I hold trump cards?"

"Yes, but you shall not defeat me, for I will give up all before you, fiend, devil that you are! shall triumph over me."

"Bah! you are making an idle threat, Georgine Gerard Granger—a threat that you will not keep."

"I will do so."

"You love money."

"Yes, but revenge is sweet and I will enjoy thwarting you."

"Speaking of revenge do you know I am acting from revenge?"

"How have I ever wronged you?"

"I will tell you."

"Long years ago, when you were a maiden of twenty and I a girl of fourteen, you won from me the man I loved, whom I idolized, child that I was."

"He wedded you, and my heart was wrecked."

"I grew callous, wicked, but married some years after, and the day my child was born my husband, a good man, was killed."

"I believed him to be rich, but he was poor, and I was left nothing to live upon, and so it was that I grew revengeful and now I am being avenged upon you."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REAL POWER.

"Yes, Georgine Gerard, I became revengeful, and hated you for stealing from me the man that I worshiped," resumed the masked woman.

"I know you now—you were a child then, and I never dreamed of your loving Lawrence Granger; and would to Heaven he had loved you—you are Charlotte Cameron."

"Yes, Little Lottie as they called me then; but I am a woman now, large and strong in mind and body."

"I sold my child to one who I knew would care for it, to your sister, for she had no child."

"My God! is Loyd Granger that child?"

"He is."

"And I adopted, I believed, her child! Oh, I thank Heaven I know that the serpent in my bosom was no kindred of mine."

"I could never love him, and when he was believed to be my son I felt horror at the thought."

"Ah! now I am happy to know that he was not Geraldine's child even—but yours!"

"Yes, mine! and it was for him that I have plotted through all, to get for him a fortune."

"You did not know me, and so I entered your service as your maid."

"It was I who plotted and planned the death of the two Captain Grangers; then of the woman the junior Granger married after he put you in the asylum, and it was the boy, my son, that administered the poisons I prepared."

"That is why he was driven from home when suspected by his father, and became an outcast."

"But I kept my eye upon him and molded him to my will, for I was working for the Granger fortune for him."

"Woman, you are indeed a devil incarnate."

"I grant that; but I am working for revenge and for gold."

"Now, tell me if you will purchase your freedom upon my terms?"

"I will not."

"I shall expose the whole story of the Grangers as they were known to be in the past, and the Government will claim your fortune as it was made from smuggling and fraud."

"Let it all go."

"You would give all up?"

"Every dollar."

"You are a fool."

"So be it, I will thwart you and have my revenge."

"Very well, I will have to play my last card."

"What is it?"

"I did not wish to do so, for I had not cared to give you other than pain, but now I will be compelled, through your stubbornness, to give you joy."

"In what way?"

"You had a child?"

"Ah, yes."

"It was stolen by Gypsies?"

"Yes."

"And died in their keeping or was put to death to prevent their being punished by the finding of the child with them?"

"Alas! alas!"

"Now let me tell you that I was a member of that Gypsy band."

"You?"

"Yes."

"And you are the monster that stole my boy?"

"I was."

"And killed him?"

"No, he is not dead."

"Not dead?"

"No."

"Oh God! what are you telling me?"

"The truth, for he was sent away by the Gypsies, and the one who carried him off was shot while traveling through Mississippi."

"Yes, yes," eagerly cried Mrs. Granger.

"The boy was found by a planter, taken to his home and adopted."

"And still lives?"

"He does."

"Tell me where he is and I will pray even for your guilty soul."

"That will come later; but let me tell you that the Gypsies supposed the planter had killed their chief, for he it was who carried the boy away, and one night they went secretly to the plantation home and every member of the family was put to death."

"They sought to find the boy, but he was away at school, and soon after became a boy tramp, a wanderer, but he has been on the track to avenge those who cared for him ever since, and yet it is too late now, for the little band of Gypsies has been wiped out, I who joined them being the last one."

"And my boy, my poor boy!"

"Tell me where he is!"

"Upon one condition."

"Upon any!"

"That you agree to my terms."

"I'll do it, for I would give up every dollar to find him, and I would know him, woman, for you cannot deceive me in my child."

"All right, rest content, and when I am ready to act, when all is ready for me to go far from here, without danger of pursuit, I will take the money you pay me, and leave you to return to your home and claim your son."

"And bad as you are, if you do this, I will bless you," was the mother's fervent response.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CROOK'S WIFE.

LET me now return to Dick Doom, after his long interview with Wirt Westley, the aider and accomplice of Loyd Granger and the woman, Carlotta Cameron, in their crimes.

Having angered the man by exposing the intended poisoning of him by the woman, to thus silence his tongue, and caused him to tell all that he knew, Dick Doom felt that he had his hand upon the helm and could manage affairs to suit himself.

He went to the office of the Secret Service chief, his firm friend, and the two sought the chief of police, so the story went into the papers that Wirt Westley had taken his own life.

This accomplished, Dick Doom asked the permission of the chief of police to see Beulah, the young wife who had allowed her wicked husband to escape at the sacrifice of herself.

He was ushered into her cell, the same that Loyd Granger had occupied, and left alone with her.

"I am Dick Doom, the detective, and I have come to have a talk with you, to save you from a cruel fate, and from one of the deepest-dyed scoundrels that ever lived," he said in a kindly tone.

Tears came into the eyes of the beautiful girl, for she was not over seventeen, and the somber surroundings, and belief that her husband had left her to her fate, impressed her deeply.

"Now, I wish to ask you several questions, and I desire truthful answers."

"Yes, sir."

"I have seen your parents, and they are willing to take you back to their hearts, to go away from here and seek a new home, if all is as I hope it is, and you are content to do as I ask."

"What do you ask, sir?"

"Are you the wife of Loyd Granger?"

In response she put her hand into an inner pocket of the youth's suit that she wore and handed to Dick Doom a paper.

He glanced at it and said;

"Yes, this is a certificate of marriage, and protects you."

"Now tell me if you knew what he was when you married him?"

"Oh, no, sir; but having married him, I clung to him."

"Now let me tell you all that he is, and then I have one question to ask you."

"Yes, sir."

Then Dick Doom told the story of the wicked youth and the woman, as he knew it, and when he had finished he asked:

"Now, if I get you out of this, will you return to your parents?"

"Gladly, sir, oh, so gladly."

"All right, I will send you some clothes I will get from your mother, and to-night I will call for you."

This he did, and the heart of the detective was made glad in the joy he brought to the household of the young crook's wife, and blessings were rained upon his head by the parents and their repentant daughter.

The next day, at the earnest request of Dick Doom, the charge against Beulah Granger was squelched, the court being willing to confer this favor upon the famous detective who had done such splendid service against the crooks.

The day after receiving word that she was not to be tried, Beulah Belton, for she took her own name again, put in a plea for a divorce in Mr. Beall's hands, to free herself from her crook husband and it was quickly granted.

Then, as Mr. Belton was a man of ample means he took his wife and daughter away from Chicago to seek a home where no cloud hung over their lives.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SHADOWED TO DEATH.

HAVING gotten the crook's wife off his hands, Dick Doom's next move was to draw in the toils to gather up the threads of his work.

He went to the home of Carlotta Cameron, dressed once more as Saul Saunders, and was admitted by the same old woman.

"Well, I am glad to see you," she said.

"You have seen the papers?"

"Yes; you did your work well."

"And my money?"

"I have it for you."

"Good! It is worth every dollar of it, for I tell you it is horrible to deliberately give poison to a man to kill him."

"Don't refer to it then."

"To kill a man in self-defense, in anger, or even revenge is not so terrible, but to poison one as you bribed me to do with that man Westley is awful."

"Bah! Take that roll of money and see if it does not ease your conscience."

"I guess it will; but do you know I'll be scared for a day or two and would like to stay here with you."

After a moment's reflection the woman said:

"All right, you can stay for several days, but then you must get out."

"I'll do it then, but now I only want to get a grip on my nerve."

"I'll show you a place where you can stay," and the woman led the way to an upper room.

"Here, this is my Irish servant's room, but she is away for a few days so you can stay here."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"I guess I'll take a nap, for I didn't sleep any last night."

She left him in the room and he threw himself upon his cot and mused:

"The Irish servant girl is away, is she?"

"I rather guess not, for I have penetrated your disguise, my charming woman, and you are the Irish girl."

"I am so used to disguises myself that I can see through them."

"You are clever, cunning and bold, but you are the Irish girl, and old Mrs. Carlotta Cameron is none other than Charlotte Hull, *alias* Frills the murderer."

"I guess a couple of days here as your guest, my dear Frills, will discover all I care to know, for I am pretty certain that you have Mrs. Granger concealed here, or near by, and also that boy murderer."

"At least I will soon know, for I am on the right track."

Thus musing he dropped to sleep, but was awakened to have his supper, which the old woman had prepared.

He ate cautiously, but felt that the woman held no suspicion of him.

After spending an hour talking to her, he feigned fatigue and went up to his room.

Pulling off his shoes he put on rubbers and stood ready to watch the movements of his hostess.

He waited an hour and then heard her leave the room and descend the stairs.

Noiselessly following, he saw her go down into the cellar, carrying a lantern with her.

He reached the stairs in time to see her suddenly disappear in the furnace at the rear wall of the house!

He had a small bull's-eye lantern with him, and when all was dark once more he proceeded to the furnace and, after a short search, saw that it was entirely a *bogus affair*.

The galvanized outer sheathing turned on a pivot, revealing a space within.

A step-ladder led down into the depths below, and descending it, the daring detective followed a narrow passage some four feet high, for about a hundred feet, when he came to another ladder.

Ascending this he found himself in an-

other false furnace, which he swung open and entered yet another cellar.

"Aha! this is the way the houses connect. One is in the rear of the other."

"I am on the right track at last."

So saying he ascended the steps to the floor above, heard voices, and standing in the darkness saw a negress and a woman talking.

"It is Frills; but she has changed her dress—yes, she wears a mask."

He hid away in the darkness and saw the woman come out and go up-stairs.

She opened a door, the key being on the outside, and entered the room.

The door was left an inch ajar, and creeping up dauntless Dick Doom heard all that was said between the woman and her prisoner, and that prisoner was Mrs. Granger.

What he heard caused the sweat to stand out in beads upon his brow, and he listened to the same story they had talked over before.

He heard the woman say that she was at last ready to go her way, and on the morrow would receive her money from Mrs. Granger and then she would tell her where to find her own real son.

"There can be no doubt?" asked the mother.

"None, for I have kept track of him. He has the Gypsy brand upon his arm by which he can be recognized, and you remember that your son had a birthmark, a red leaf, upon his chest."

"Yes, he had!"

"My God! I have the red leaf upon my own chest!" and the great detective trembled like a leaf.

"I was stolen by Gypsies—yes, now I know why it was I determined to follow out this Granger mystery."

"Oh, dear Heaven! my own mother!"

Dick Doom staggered away from the door, retraced his steps, and when, half an hour later, the woman returned, he was apparently sound asleep.

When she had retired he went back to that other house, opened the door, called, was answered, and the scene that followed, the meeting of those two, mother and son, I leave the reader to imagine, for it cannot be described.

After an hour spent with his mother, and learning that Loyd Granger was in the house, he proceeded to his room to arrest him.

He unlocked the door, started back as he turned the light upon the bed, a revolver in hand, for there lay the young crook stained with his life-blood.

Never very strong in physique, he had been taken with a hemorrhage of the lungs and thus his lamp of life had gone out; alone and in darkness his stained soul had gone—whither?

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

THE negress, Dinah, was next arrested, but Mrs. Granger pleaded for her as being ignorant of how wicked her mistress was, and possessing a kind heart; so Dick Doom willingly promised not to prosecute her; his mother's wish now was a command to him.

Leaving the negress with Mrs. Granger, he retraced his way through the two cellars to the other house, crept up to the door of the dread woman plotter's room and knocked.

"Who is it?"

"Me, madam—Saul Saunders, and I'm going to get out."

"Wait until I throw on my wrapper."

A moment after the door opened and standing in the shadow the woman asked:

"Why do you go at night thus?"

"Because, my dear Miss Carlotta Cameron, *alias* Charlotte Hull, *alias* Frills, I am anxious to place you behind iron bars for your murders."

"I have your son's dead body in the next house. I have set my own dear mother free,

so know me now as Dick Doom the New Orleans detective, to be, in the future, Richard Granger, ex-ferret, for my life-work as a crook-catcher is finished when you are behind prison walls, you veritable fiend!"

The woman stood like one dazed. She was livid, quivering, and had not the power to speak.

"Hold out your hands!" commanded the detective, fiercely.

She obeyed and the Golden Fetters were clasped upon the wrists.

"Now I will secure you here until I return."

He bound her securely to the bed and at once departed from the house.

When he returned, an hour later, the two chiefs were with him. They had congratulated him over and over again upon his sleepless chase, and when they knew all—how he had discovered himself, or in other words, had shadowed his own case, they pronounced it the most marvelous case on record.

Leaving the chiefs and their men in charge, Dick Doom escorted his now deeply happy mother to her home, and the next morning went down to see his excellent friend, the Secret Service chief.

"I set Saunders free, Dick, as you requested, and the chief of police holds Westley upon requisition papers that arrived last night from England, for his crimes there, so that takes his case out of our hands."

"And the woman?"

"She spoke but a few words—only said:

"I will never hang!"

"But, chief, your manner indicates that more has happened!"

"She kept her threat, Dick, for she took a poison she had concealed about her, and now lies dead in her cell."

"So be it! I am avenged!" and Dick seemed to be deeply moved. From to day, chief," he spoke after a moment silence, "I live to make my long-suffering, much-persecuted mother happy. You will hear no more of Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Fetters."

"No more of Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Star, you should say!" cried the admiring chief. "I shall have that star made and on it inscribed:

'DICK DOOM, THE DAUNTLESS—

The Detective who Never Failed—

The Man of Honor whom all Honor,

and be proud to have my own name attached as the donor.

"Will you accept such a gift?"

Much moved the detective answered:

"I will accept it, chief, as the most precious souvenir you could bestow."

Clasping hands—the curtain drops.

The career of the Famous Ferret is ended, unless, indeed, some great emergency shall call him to the front again.

THE END.

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